

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS
OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S ENCOUNTERS
WITH ANCIENT EGYPTIAN OBJECTS

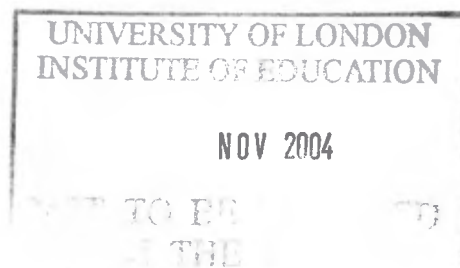
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ABSTRACT

This inquiry seeks an understanding of the experiential meanings of primary school children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects by using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. To demonstrate how this methodology is practised, adult experiences of an exhibition of ancient Egyptian sculpture and contemporary art are analyzed and interpreted. A survey of ideas from theoretical and phenomenological literature follows, focusing on the visual, tactile and verbal dimensions of children's awareness, (itself a problematic term). The physical and social aspects of the teaching and researching context are then investigated, to discover how they impinge upon the children's experience as a whole. To consider the philosophical ideas which underpin hermeneutic phenomenology along with their application to educational research, the ideas of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Gadamer, van Manen, Bollnow and Vandenberg are discussed; with particular reference to bracketing prejudices; collecting and analyzing observational and interview data; and interpreting the children's experience through writing and rewriting. A narrative description which aims to recreate the immediacy and complexity of the experience is then included, using composite verbal statements from the children's letters and interviews, as well as insights from my own teaching experience. The four phenomenological existentials of *lived-space*, *lived-body*, *lived-time* and *lived-human relations* are then utilized to create a structure for interpreting the common themes of this experience. These comprise the fear of disorientation, entrapment, death, 'real' objects, being under surveillance, and experiencing alternate feelings of fear and excitement; wonder, stunned amazement and curiosity; being imaginatively transported to an ancient time; and empathic/empathetic feelings of being 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians. Findings suggest that children's embodied responses which emanate from their visual and tactile experiences, can inform not only a deeper understanding of how their feelings, imagination and memories interact, but also how this interaction has relevance for primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank James Putnam of the British Museum, whose exhibition, 'time machine: *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*', 1994-5, initially inspired and catalyzed this research. Thanks also go to the British Museum's Education Department for allowing me to use their videotaped data of interviews with visitors who attended the exhibition.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to all the children and teachers who participated in this research study, by allowing me to run outreach sessions and interviews in their schools, by taking part in the educational activities in the museum, and by sending letters to me about their experiences. I would also like to thank Eton College and the curator, Stephen Spurr, for giving me the chance to work on the centenary exhibition, *The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College 1999-2000*, and for supporting the educational programme which not only enabled the children to use a handling collection of ancient objects, but also ultimately enriched the quality of their experiences. Furthermore, I want to thank the Egyptologists, Nicholas Reeves of the Myers Museum, and Catharine Rhoerig of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for teaching me so much about ancient Egypt and the art of mounting exhibitions. And express my gratitude to Margaret Laming and Vivien Canning for supplying me with photographic data of the children.

Most sincere thanks go to both my supervisors: to Rose Montgomery-Whicher, for introducing me to hermeneutic phenomenology and the work of Max van Manen, and for supplying me with constant academic advice over the internet since moving back to Canada in 2000. And to Pam Meecham, for giving me encouragement, wise academic counsel, regular opportunities for rigorous discussion, and pastoral support throughout the latter and most crucial stages of this study.

And last, and by no means least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my husband and children: for respecting my interest in this study, asking awkward questions, being patient when it has taken me away from them, and giving me the encouragement to see it through to the end.

FOREWORD

This research study was initially inspired from my visit to an exhibition at the British Museum in 1994/1995 entitled, *time machine: ancient Egypt and contemporary art*. Subsequently, an opportunity to consult video data of adult responses to the exhibition, gave me an insight into how this juxtaposition of art from two very distinctive cultures and time periods, could not only provoke a sense of wonder and a thirst for learning, but also provide a fascination for the often common, and yet uniquely personal ways in which they were expressed.

By 1998 my increasing fascination for understanding people's responses to art, led to an interest in hermeneutic phenomenology - a research methodology which investigates the meaning structure of lived experience. In addition, an invitation to work on an exhibition of Egyptian antiquities at the Myers Museum, Eton College, enabled me to plan an educational programme for primary school children who study *Ancient Egypt* as a National Curriculum history topic. Both these factors contributed to the evolution and focus of this study, which works *towards an understanding of the experiential meanings of primary school children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects*.

Over the nine month period of the exhibition I conducted outreach sessions at sixteen schools, where I introduced the children to the collection through slides, objects and jigsaws, in addition to discussing each forthcoming visit to the museum with the respective teachers. On the day of their museum visit the children took part in three activities namely: observational drawing, a treasure hunt and a handling session. However, because I was responsible for the care of the six ancient objects in the handling collection, I had to supervise these sessions, leaving the visiting teachers in charge of the remaining two activities. In an ideal research situation continuous observation of the children would have been undertaken throughout their museum visit; unfortunately, because my teaching commitments militated against this, my first-hand observation was restricted to the handling activity alone.

To investigate the children's experience and collect some data, I revisited the schools and each teacher selected children for me to interview. Whilst it was a

bonus to listen and record children who were forthcoming about their encounter, it was also interesting to discover a range of responses. Therefore, I deliberately chose not to ask for a specific sample. However, once the interviews began it became noticeable that while some teachers had chosen particularly articulate pupils, others had made a more random selection. Throughout these sessions I was not only able to hear how the children responded throughout their visit, but also observe their gestures as they relived their experience in the telling. Although one interview group included eight children, most groups comprised three or four. (See Appendix 1 page 354 for a list of the schools, the children's year group, number of interviews, children in each group, total number of children interviewed, and the interview dates).

In addition to the interviews, fifteen schools sent letters to me which I was able to use as data. Though some of these were very brief expressions of thanks, others included descriptions, evaluations and feelings about the objects and their visit as a whole. When the letters were analyzed, the influence of the class teacher was often discernible; for example, some classes began their writing using the same phrase or adopted a similar letter format. In all cases I ensured that every teacher, whose classes supplied me with verbal or written data, was aware of the way in which I would be using the children's responses in my research. Furthermore, to endorse this I obtained signed permission from these teachers; thus, everyone was aware that the data would only be used anonymously. I was also fortunate in gaining permission from a friend and a teacher from one of the schools, to use their photographic images of the children interacting with the objects. Fifteen of these photographs have been included below.

As this research developed, I discovered that trying to uncover the meaning structure of the children's experience using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach necessitated writing in a largely descriptive style, as Chapter 5 shows. However, there were other parts of the study (for example, Chapters 2 and 3) which needed a more theoretical treatment, as they drew upon art and museum education, philosophy, art history and primary pedagogy. In these chapters issues were often raised which, though not seminal to the text, contributed to a

broader understanding of the subject. The use of footnotes therefore, provided a space to underscore important points raised in the main text without disrupting the prose or flow of the argument.

A fundamental aspect of phenomenological research involves a rigorous engagement with the experience in question followed by a written description which reveals hitherto hidden aspects of the encounter. In an attempt to recreate the complexity and spontaneity of the children's experience in Chapter 5 therefore, I experimented with various strategies, but eventually settled on a narrative of a school visit to the museum within a dramatic format. Drawing on my own extensive experience of teaching primary school children, including leading a great many educational visits to museums and galleries, I took the role of Mrs. Thomas, the class teacher. Then, using both entirely representative composite statements taken verbatim from the research data of children's letters and interviews, I attributed these words to six children, namely - Bella, Rahul, James, Edward, Harriet and Zahra.

Throughout the course of this narrative and the analysis which followed, I found that there were numerous instances when the children's statements and gestures resonated with literary accounts from lived experience, poetry and novels. Where these excerpts helped to expand the understanding of the phenomenon in question, they were included.

Having unfolded the experience in a descriptive way in Chapter 5, I decided to analyze the children's experience in Chapter 6. In the process of quoting from over one hundred and thirty of the children's statements, I used the four phenomenological existentials of *lived-space*, *lived-body*, *lived-time* and *lived-human relations*, as lenses through which the children's experience could be viewed. It was only when the latter had been described that common and unique facets of the encounter emerged in a thematic way. These themes were then discussed in the light of further phenomenological theory, in order that the experience could be understood both in part and as a whole.

Despite the fact that this research embodied not only my long-standing interest

in art history and primary education, in addition to a more recent interest in hermeneutic phenomenology, it was important to acknowledge my position when I interviewed the children and later when I embarked upon the interpretive phase the study. Being enthusiastic about my new curatorial responsibilities gave me the impetus not only to promote the exhibition and see it succeed, but more significantly, put me in danger of being blind to the existence of any potential problems. It was imperative therefore that my thoughts and feelings were *bracketed* if I was to achieve a more balanced account of the experience. Thus, whilst the children's responses were predominantly positive, I ensured that a representative selection of negative voices was also heard.

When the final stages of the research were reached I became aware that though there were some similarities between the adults' experiences of ancient Egyptian art (Chapter 1), and the children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects (Chapters 5 and 6), there were some other surprising findings which were exclusive to the children's experience. These concerned the way in which the children interpreted their responses through the use of embodied speech, gesture and silence; the importance of the interaction of the objects and the museum context; the variety, unexpected and often paradoxical reactions to dead or mummified exhibits; the compelling experience of touching 'real' ancient exhibits evoking empathy, compassion, admiration and responsibility; and the way in which both the children's individual imagination and memory were continually brought into play throughout their encounter.

Whilst, I set out initially to *understand* the meaning structure of the children's encounter throughout this study, I became aware that though many common aspects of the experience were revealed - enabling me to see the phenomenon more clearly as a whole, the uniqueness of each child's experience and the uniqueness of my own interpretation precluded a definitive description being written. In consequence, I amended the title of the study, to '*working towards an understanding of primary school children's experiences with ancient Egyptian objects*'.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ART FROM THE EXHIBITION
time machine : *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*
THE BRITISH MUSEUM 1994 - 5.

Stephen Cox

1.1 FLASK (1991) - a sculpture made from Hammamat Breccia. Height 1.83 m.

Andy Goldsworthy

1.2 LEAFWORK (1994) - sweet chestnut leaves in a black basalt libation bowl.
c. 625 BC. Diameter 78cm.

1.3 SANDWORK (22-25.10.1994) - installation made from 30 tons of sand - and a cibachrome print of the temporary work.

1.4 LEAFWORK (1994) - sweet chestnut leaves in a chestnut wooden box within a grano- diorite sarcophagus of Hapmen. c. 600 BC. Length 2.75 m.

1.5 SANDWORK (1994) - in the green breccia sarcophagus of King Nectanebo II.
c. 345 BC. Length 3.13 m.

1.6 STONWORK (1994) - in the schist sarcophagus of the God's Adorer,
Ankhnesneferibre. c. 530 BC. Length 2.6 m.

David Hiscock

1.7 THE ROSETTA STONE BAR CODE (1994) - etched zinc plate, powder-coated
and sand-blasted. Height 43.5 x Width 56 cm.

Liliane Karnouk

1.8 INSTALLATION (1994) - showing gothic cemetery railings around an ancient
Egyptian sarcophagus of Nesisut. c.450 BC.

Between each railing-spear miniature cloned date palm-trees are suspended in
test-tubes. Length 2.47 m.

Rita Keegan

1.9 INSTALLATION (1994) - including: personal artefacts; CD Roms; CCTV; a statue
of Kaitep and Hetepheres. c.2,300 BC; small ancient Egyptian artefacts; and
incense.

Jiri Kolar

1.10 UNTITLED (1994) - collage-covered resin replica of the Gayer-Anderson cat.
Height 38cm. (original of bronze) c. 600 BC.

Alexander Mihaylovich

1.11 COLOSSUS OF MENES (1994) - mixed media including a large oil painting of a
pharaoh's colossal statue. Width 4.88 x Height 7.62 m.

Igor Mitoraj

1.12 ECLIPSE (1994) - white marble head in a grano-diorite libation bowl of Mentuemhat. c. 660 BC. Length 35 cm. x 29 cm.

1.13 IRON SHADOWS (1994) - colossal cast-iron face fragment. Height 2.1 m.

Marc Quinn

1.14 BREAD HANDS (1991) - installation from the follow-on exhibition: time machine : *Antico Egitto e Arte Contemporanea* , Turin 1995.

1.15 FROG (1994) - installation of mixed media including: a hibernating North American Wood Frog in a resin box, within a perspex head on the top of a refrigeration unit.

Peter Randall Page

1.16 OUROBOROS (1994) - a sculpture in Kilkenny limestone. 76.5 x 191 x 187 cm.

Martin Riches

1.17 RA (1994) - an interactive sound sculpture which says the name Ra when its bellows are depressed. Placed within a granite monolithic shrine. 143-137 BC. Height 2.5 m.

Kate Whiteford

1.18 FALSE DOOR OF PTAHSHEPSES (1994) - two paintings (preparatory studies) in red and green fluorescent pigment inspired by the incised hieroglyphs of the ancient False Door of Ptahshepses. c.2450 BC. from Saqqara, in limestone. Height 3.66 m.



Stephen Cox
1.1 *FLASK* 1991

Andy Goldsworthy
1.2 *LEAFWORK* 1994



Andy Goldsworthy
1.3 *SANDWORK* 1994



Andy Goldsworthy
1.4 *LEAFWORK* 1994





Andy Goldsworthy
1.5 *SANDWORK* 1994



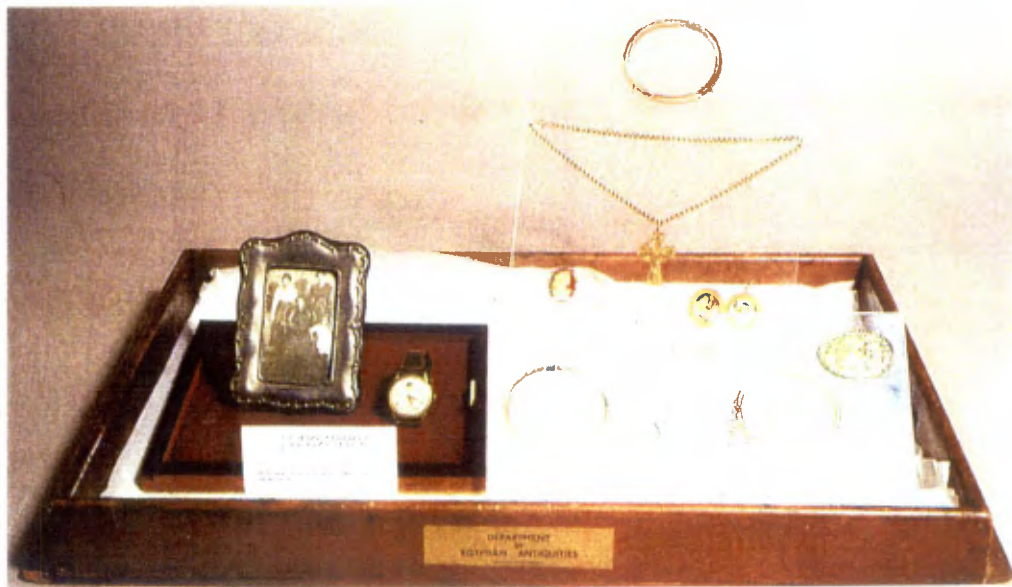
Andy Goldsworthy
1.6 *STONework* 1994



David Hiscock
1.7 *THE ROSETTA STONE BAR CODE* 1994



Liliane Karnouk
1.8 *INSTALLATION* 1994

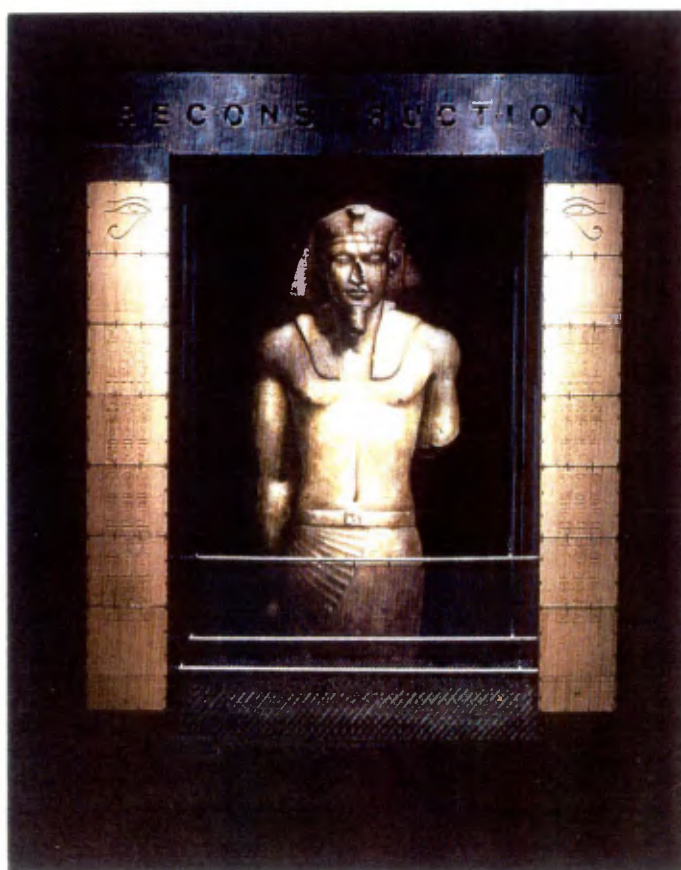


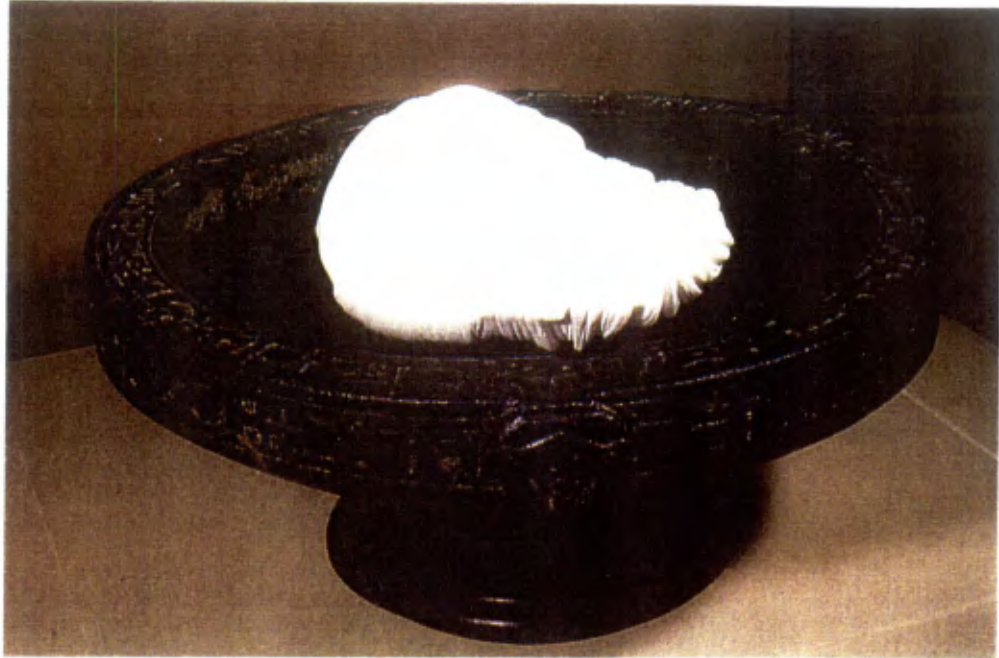
Rita Keegan
1.9 *INSTALLATION* 1994

Jiri Kolar
1.10 *UNTITLED* 1994



Alexander Mihaylovich
1.11 *COLOSSUS OF MENES* 1994



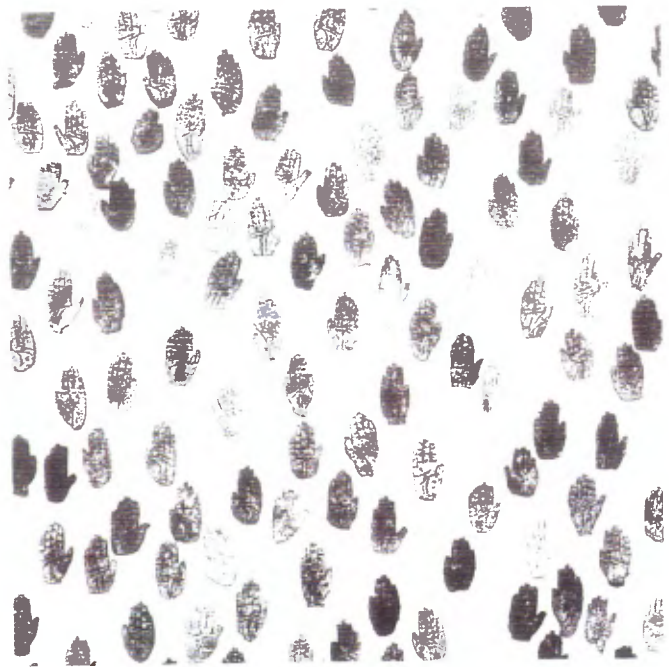


Igor Mitoraj
1.12 *ECLIPSE* 1994



Igor Mitoraj
1.13 *IRON SHADOWS* 1994

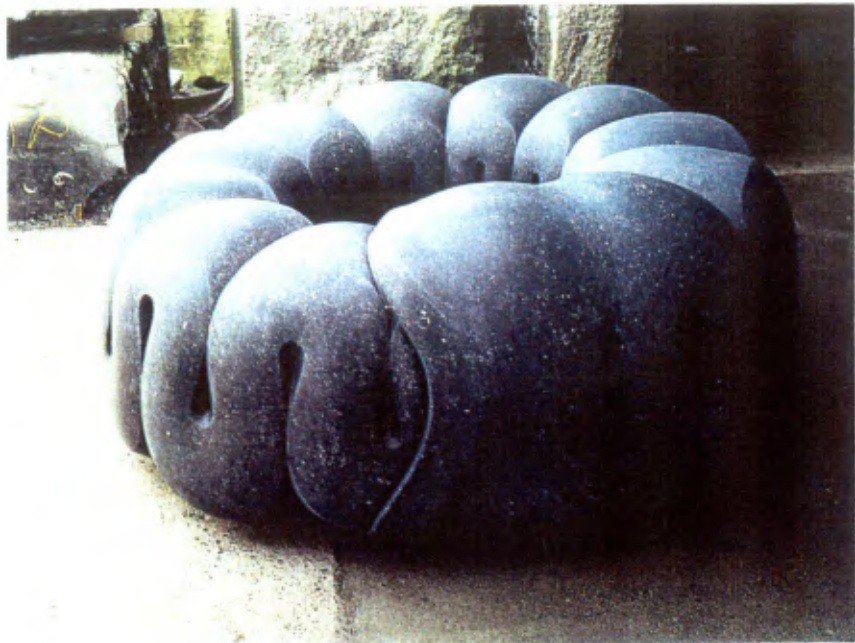
Marc Quinn
1.14 *BREAD HANDS* 1991



Marc Quinn
1.15 *FROG* 1994

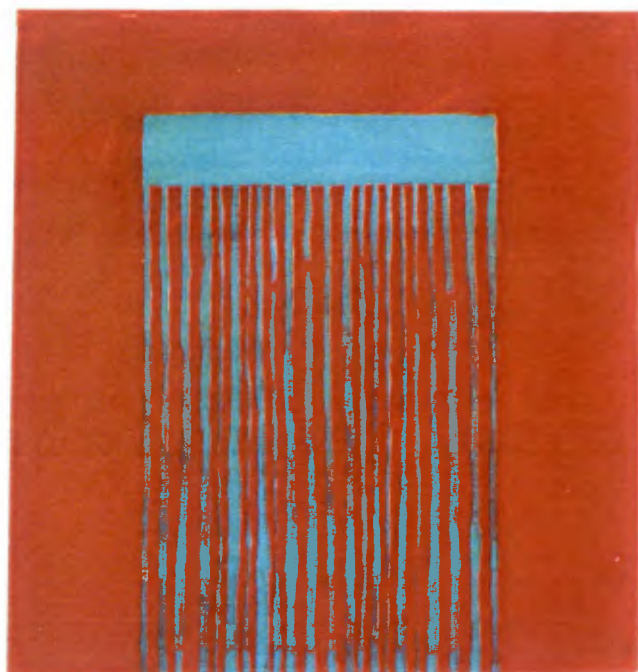


Peter Randall-Page
1.16 *OUROBOROS* 1994



Martin Riches
1.17 *RA* 1994





Kate Whiteford
1.18 *THE FALSE DOOR OF PTAHSHEPSES* 1994

CHAPTER ONE
THE EPIPHANY OF THE QUESTION - A PILOT STUDY

How an exploration of the exhibition,
'time machine: *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*', 1994-95,
and an introduction to hermeneutic phenomenology,
helped to inspire and energize this study.

1. SOURCES OF INSPIRATION:

1.1 Ancient Voices Call to the Heart:

Igor Mitoraj, an artist who took part in the exhibition, time machine : *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art* ¹, writes:

I felt lost like a grain of sand in the desert of Egypt. What do the immense eyes of the statues see, looking inside their soul and gazing for centuries at their shadows in the light of the sun and the moon? How is it possible to describe the magnetic force that this ancient civilisation releases? ... Art is the real time machine, that allows us to approach so far a shore (Mitoraj, in *The Artists, and The Trustees of the British Museum*, 1994:22).

What is it like to stand before the colossal majesty of Egyptian statues? In this short reflective description, Mitoraj tries to understand his experience. He felt spatially insignificant - 'lost like a grain of sand in the desert'; diminished bodily by their immense proportions; temporally incredulous of their great age; and relationally awestruck by the skill of the ancient Egyptians who created them. But more than this, as he gazed, he mused on the notion of the soul - for him something which is timeless, immortal and spiritual. It was these works of art, these statues, which allowed him to travel back in time and, 'approach so far a shore'.

What does it *feel* ² like to be captivated and inspired by ancient Egyptian works of art? What *is* the 'magnetic force' they release, which brings them to life, fires our imagination and transports us to another time³? And furthermore, how does the mystery and wonder they embody, help us to draw nearer to an understanding of the 'far-off shores' of human experience by filling us with questions⁴? In the following quotation the philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, describes the relationship between objects, questions and understanding: he says, 'The voice that speaks to us from the past - be it text, work, trace - itself poses a question and places our meaning in openness' (Gadamer, 1975:337).

When I experienced the juxtaposition of ancient Egyptian sculpture and contemporary art at the exhibition, time machine, in 1994, I too began to ask questions⁵.

Though intent on seeing the exhibition, once I turned the corner and caught sight of the British Museum I became very uneasy. Was it, I wondered, the museum's monumental façade with its towering columns, which had prompted these feelings, or perhaps its reputation as a bastion of high culture and academe? Notwithstanding these queries, as soon as I pushed open the plate-glass doors I was hurtled into a maelstrom of noise, activity and hordes of people. Where could I find the Egyptian sculpture gallery? Which way should I go? After being jostled and swept along with the crowd I finally arrived, only to find myself face to face with an enormous, intriguing pile of sand. What exactly was this, and why was it here? As I stood entranced by its beautifully landscaped peaks, and the snake-like artistry with which it curled around those ancient sculptures, memories of childhood holidays by the sea flowed into my mind. But more than this, as I lingered there, soaking up the atmosphere, I became transported to the dry, dusty heat of the desert and the banks of the Nile. Why had Goldsworthy's work (ref. fig. 1.3), captivated me? How had it led me to this mysterious civilization cradled in a past time and a foreign land?

This short account describes how a novel and exciting experience had initially provoked feelings of unease. I had rarely visited the British Museum, was unfamiliar with ancient Egyptian sculpture⁶, and knew little about the work of the contemporary artists which shared the same stage. However, as I became fascinated by this exhibition I began to realize how potentially rich it was, not merely as a catalyst for imaginative and creative thought, but one which could provide people with meaningful experiences.

Subsequently, in the process of investigating time machine as part of an academic project, I was given access to a selection of videotaped interviews which the British Museum's education department had recorded with visitors to the exhibition⁷. As I studied the visitors' reactions, opinions and perceptions on the videotapes, I began to wonder whether they had experienced the same fascination as I. What was it like to witness a dialogue between the ancient and the new? How did they *feel* when they saw contemporary works which matched the monumentality of the ancients⁸? Moreover, did they recognise that though some works appeared ancient, they were constructed from modern materials⁹? And, if baffled by this, how did it feel to be confused? Filled with curiosity to analyse and interpret the data, I was eager to find out what it was like to experience the exhibition, time machine. Relating the findings of this pilot study therefore, is the first objective of this chapter.

1.2. Time Machine: the Exhibition Evolves:

Before embarking on this task however, it is important to sketch in some background information about the exhibition itself. In 1992 the curator, James Putnam, sought and eventually gained the British Museum's permission to mount an exhibition juxtaposing contemporary art and ancient Egyptian artefacts. In fact, though this idea might have been considered daring, there was a precedent as the sculptor, Henry Moore, had accepted an invitation to exhibit one of his pieces next to some ancient Greek sculpture in 1969. Writing to Lord Eccles, Chairman of the Trustees of the museum, he says:

I am delighted by your idea of a comparison between sculpture made nowadays and something made in 3000 B.C. Such a comparison might help to show that common fundamental sculptural ideas persist - and it would support the optimistic belief that there is a continuity in ideas and their expression. Also it could suggest that the British Museum should not be looked on as a collection of dead art disconnected from our own times. (Moore, in James,1992:165-166).

Moore articulated his particular interest in 'primitive art' - a term which embraced ancient Egyptian works, he contends:

The most striking quality common to all primitive art is its intense vitality. It is something made by people with a direct and immediate response to life. Sculpture and painting for them was not an activity of calculation or academism, but a channel for expressing powerful beliefs, hopes and fears ... But apart from its own enduring value, a knowledge of it conditions a fuller and truer appreciation of the later developments of the so-called great periods, and shows art to be a universal continuous activity with no separation between past and present (Moore, in James,1992:157).

While Moore appreciated the way in which these ancient artists expressed their powerful beliefs, hopes and fears through their sculpture and painting, he indicates that it was these human responses which undergirded the continuity between the art of the past and the present. However, though we might not now, given contemporary theory, be so certain of the continuities, the juxtaposition of ancient and modern was for Putnam a compelling vision.

To bring his idea to fruition then, Putnam approached twelve contemporary artists, and by the autumn of 1994, twenty-two diverse works had been produced in response to the museum's Egyptian collection. In due course these were displayed in the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery alongside the ancient artefacts, and included installations, paintings, sculpture, photography and interactive pieces (The Artists, and Trustees of the British Museum,1994: Foreword).

Bearing in mind the arrangement of these exhibits, and Moore's suggestions, it would be interesting to speculate whether the visitors to time machine appreciated that the art of the past and the present stands as an embodiment of human beliefs, hopes and fears (Moore, in James, 1992:157). And moreover, if that is so, whether the museum, which plays host to these meanings, could indeed revitalise its cultural relevance by creating links between yesterday and today?

1.3. Developing a Self-Reflective Approach:

In its way this was a radical exhibition - it challenged popular conceptions of what a museum, and more particularly, what the British Museum, stood for. Furthermore, it questioned notions of art and artefact; made people re-examine their own history, their own concept of time, and encouraged them to compare cultural and religious practices. In an article entitled, *About Time*, James Hall writes:

The BM has for a long time had a reputation for being stuffy and aloof, run along the lines of an exclusive gentleman's club ... yet under its new director, Robert Anderson, some attitudes appear to be changing ... the most daring new development of all has just opened in the Egyptian Sculpture Galleries ... Rumours have been circulating for months that Time Machine: Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art would be cancelled ... Not everything comes off, but the show should be regarded as a triumph ... Now that the ice has been so brilliantly broken, let's hope that the British Museum preserves and develops its links with contemporary art (Hall, in *The Guardian*, 5 December 1994:5-6).

Inspired by the practice of overturning established codes of display, henceforth, I explored the concept of learning through difference; developed an interest in the ancient Egyptians; became much more open-minded about contemporary art; and continued to investigate other exhibitions which used this *interventionist* strategy¹⁰.

However, while the appeal of this exhibition energized my research, I was compelled by scholarship to take a step back, acknowledging that there could be other attitudes and positions. It was at this point that I was introduced to hermeneutic phenomenology, and in particular to the process of self-reflection or 'bracketing'. Through this process I became not only more conscious of my personal preferences, values and biases, but learnt to listen to every interviewee so that the phenomenon of time machine could be investigated

thoroughly¹¹. Demonstrating how I used this methodology to develop this study is the second aim of this chapter.

1.4.Hermeneutic Phenomenology - the Path Towards Understanding:

In the intervening period between visiting the exhibition and studying it, I began to learn more about using hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research method. As a consequence, I became interested in understanding human beings in the context of 'lived experience', and was keen to discover how this understanding might help me become more sensitive and responsive to the people with whom I lived and worked.

As I read about this branch of human science I became aware that all experience is part of the *lifeworld* which is made up of pre-reflective and reflective spheres. Our primal state of existence or being is a communion with the world - that is to say our bodies and the world co-constitute one another (Heidegger,1973:149). In this 'real' state we have no knowledge of our existence, which means we exist pre-reflectively; however, once we are drawn out of this state through *awareness*, we not only become reflective and conscious of the world and our existence *in* the world, but we begin to know the world as 'reality'. Our senses therefore, are the conduit through which we make contact with the world, and our feelings are embodied expressions of the way in which that contact is made¹² (Husserl, in van Manen,1990:7). Thus, to try to understand the phenomena of existence, it is necessary to attempt to penetrate these embodied feelings which help us gain access to the pre-reflective sphere of existence. However, because this sphere is unknown to us we need to use both our cognitive and intuitive faculties. It is only by paying attention to our feelings - to what is expressed, the way it is expressed and the spaces in between, that the defining character or essence of experience can be understood. This means being attentive to gesture, words and silence, to 'break through the taken for granted dimensions of everyday life' (van Manen, 1997:346).

Thus, if I was to try to understand the visitors who experienced time machine, I would need to observe their gestures and listen to their statements on the

videotape. Quoting Goethe, Martin Heidegger said, ‘ “Look for nothing behind phenomena: they themselves are what is to be learned”. This means that the phenomenon itself ... sets us the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something to us’ (Goethe, in Heidegger,1978:442). Writing about the crucial role of language, Gadamer asserts:

In all our knowledge of ourselves, and in all knowledge of the world, we are already encompassed by the language that is our own. We grow up, and become acquainted with men and in the last analysis with ourselves when we learn to speak. Learning to speak does not mean learning to use a preexistent tool for designating a world already somehow familiar to us; it means acquiring a familiarity and acquaintance with the world itself and how it confronts us (Gadamer,1976:62-3).

Focusing on the text is a way of grasping, or more precisely, being grasped by, the phenomenon as it is lived in everyday life. Its ‘vividness’ brings us nearer to the lived meaning of the experience by inciting our reflective responses to wonder, question and hopefully understand. This means being on the look out for words which carry poetic, expressive or ‘epiphanic’ meanings which lie beyond or within language (van Manen,1997:353-55)¹³. It also involves considering the impact of silence - that ‘circle of the unexpressed’, which enables the words which are uttered to stand out in relief (Lipps, in Gadamer, 1976:xxxii).

In addition, according to Max van Manen (1990,1997), every aspect of the text can be plumbed for meaning by analysing idiomatic phrases and the etymology of key words¹⁴. He also points out how the pattern which words make with one another can make significant differences to the way that meaning is interpreted: alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition, imagery, rhyme, sentence structure and diction can all affect the character of an interpretation. Gestures and stress or emphasis can also help meanings to crystallize. Furthermore, just as everyone who describes an experience brings something unique to his/her account, so everyone who understands an account of lived experience will bring something unique to his/her interpretation.

Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis succeeds when it reveals aspects of humanness which resonate with people, and when these aspects are shown to be common to other accounts of a particular experience¹⁵. There is no guarantee however, that these aspects/themes will be common, nor that the ‘epiphanic’,

or felt meanings, will reverberate with those who are doing the interpreting. Van Manen (1997), explains what it is like to experience an epiphanic moment:

We experience an epiphanic moment when a text suddenly speaks to us, when it addresses us in a manner that validates our experience, when it conveys a life understanding that stirs our sensibilities, when it pulls the strings of unity of our being. Phenomenological text makes us think, it makes the world address us and call on us to think our feeling in the broadest and deepest sense of the term. It moves us to experience reflectively life's meaning at the level of sensory and pre-reflective awareness as well as at the level of reflective meaning that concerns our place in life (van Manen,1997:366-7).

However, occasionally it is possible to find written accounts of lived experience which have relevance for the phenomenon which one is investigating¹⁶. These can be either in the form of literature - in fiction, poetry or prose, or alternatively in theoretical or phenomenological writing. Throughout this study, despite searching exhaustively for descriptive accounts of people's experiences of ancient Egyptian art, very few appear to be available.

How then, did I set about analysing the data from time machine, to find out what it is like to experience ancient Egyptian sculpture when it is juxtaposed with contemporary art in the context of the British Museum?

2. ANALYZING THE DATA¹⁷:

2.1 The Interviewees:

Initially, I noted the different groups of people who took part in the interviews; they were as follows:

- Two middle-aged women who had come specifically to see the exhibition.
- A female lecturer and two male students who were studying illustration.
- A young Scots girl who was possibly a British Museum employee.
- The artist, Kiki Smith, who exhibited a work in time machine, in Turin.
- A young Irish couple who discovered the exhibition by chance.
- A young black woman who came specifically to see the exhibition.
- A mother and her seven year old son from the U S A.
- James Putnam, curator of time machine, and the artist, Alexander Mihaylovich.
- Rita Keegan, one of the artists of time machine.
- Two female mature arts' foundation students from the University of Middlesex.

- A group of MA (Museums and Galleries in Education) students from The Institute of Education, University of London.
- A sculptor and her friend.

From this list of twenty-five people there was a representative cross-section of ages across the adult spectrum; for example, six interviewees appeared to be over fifty years of age, and possibly one or two were actually sixty. Of the remainder, three or possibly four were forty; five were in their thirties, and about ten were in their twenties. The child was seven years old. Almost half of this number were students and four were artists. Each interview took place in the Egyptian gallery and, apart from Rita Keegan, James Putnam and Alexander Mihaylovich, every one was conducted during the normal opening hours of the exhibition.

2.2 Analysing the Data - The Questions:

While I hoped that the interviewer¹⁸ would ask questions which would reveal aspects of the lifeworld existentials¹⁹ (van Manen,1990:101-106), that is: 'lived body', 'lived time', 'lived space' and 'lived human relations', all the questions, without exception, were conceptually based. For example, 'So what is your impression of what the whole show's about?' Or, 'Do you think the relationship to Egyptian themes comes out?' Or even, 'Your immediate reaction then to this; does it make any sense to you?'

2.3 Analysing the Data - Identifying Common Themes:

In the light of these questions, the common themes which were identified tended to have a correspondingly conceptual gloss or bias. In spite of the interviewer's focus and emphasis however, there were instances when the interviewees described how they *felt*, or in other words, how their experience was *lived* rather than theorized. I analyzed idiomatic phrases and etymological sources, as well as observations of gestures, intonation, emphasis and silence.

The common themes are listed below:

- The need to touch and the joy of touching artefacts and art in a museum. 'One couldn't keep one's hands off ...'
- Feeling confused - feeling lost - feeling overwhelmed - not being able to find *meaning* in the art.
- Seeing things with 'fresh eyes'; re-experiencing things.

- Being compelled to ask questions by feelings of excitement, curiosity, wonder, fascination and intrigue.
- Remembering - experiencing different feelings about the past - feeling placed in time.
- Feeling near to the humanness of both the ancient and contemporary artists, experienced as familiarity.
- Experiencing art 'in the flesh' helped to make it come alive.
- Feeling uneasy and anxious - 'it's a little bit sinister'.

To demonstrate the process of phenomenological research three of these themes will be investigated, these are: touching; remembering/being placed in time; and experiencing humanness through familiarity. However, though this experience will be examined in a distinctive way from different starting points, which will ultimately create a particular understanding, it should be acknowledged that this exercise is only partial. Had I undertaken to explore and reflect on all the themes, it would have been possible to understand the experience as a whole as well as discover how each theme contributed to that understanding.

Van Manen (1990), suggests that the research process of focusing on human beings in their humanness allows us to probe the secrets of the world by addressing its mysteries. To reflect on ways in which the visitors, 'speak the world instead of speaking of it', therefore, I hoped to go some way towards solving some of these mysteries by describing the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990:5,13).

3. INTERPRETING THE DATA:

3.1 The Role of Writing:

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological method, I read and reread the transcriptions and listed the idiomatic phrases and statements which struck me as having a 'prophetic' quality. I then focused on each example considering the etymological sources of relevant words, whilst also bearing in mind the emphasis with which the words were said, the gestures which might have accompanied them, and even the silences. This meant consulting the videotape repeatedly to establish how all these facets related to one another, and to the overall tenor of the interview. This rigorous approach allowed the pre-

reflective meanings of the language to become apparent. The process of writing and rewriting, which is characterised by a constantly reflective approach, was helpful in the way that it encouraged hitherto neglected aspects of the experience to emerge.

3.2.1 Interpreting the Common Themes: Touching:

I begin by focusing on *touch* as a significant aspect of the experience of time machine. While the museum did not invite visitors to touch the exhibits, there were no labels prohibiting it; so, for example, people could touch: Stephen Cox's, *FLASK* (ref. fig. 1.1); Peter Randall-Page's Kilkenny Limestone snake, *OUROBOROS* (ref. fig 1.16), and Martin Riches' interactive voice sculpture, *RA* (ref. fig. 1.17)²⁰. As a rule, warders are a constantly watchful presence in this gallery, and anyone caught touching an ancient artefact is usually reproved immediately. However, because the majority of sculptures were vast and unprotected, most museum visitors seemed tempted to run their hands over them regardless of their age, rarity and inviolable status.

What was it like to touch? Some visitors commented that: 'it is great to touch'²¹; 'people can actually touch'; and, 'I like the fact that I feel I can touch and no one's going to stop me'. These interviewees emphasized not only that they felt privileged because they were allowed to touch, but that touching itself felt wonderful. Moreover, the person who said, 'I was so used to not being able to touch that I didn't think to touch', points to the fact that museum visits are predominantly confined to the ritual of *seeing* rather than *touching*.

Touch is fundamental to learning about the world²²; indeed, it is instinctive for us to touch to enhance our powers of investigation and discovery. Ortega y Gasset (1978), tells us:

The decisive form of our intercourse with things is in fact touch. And if this is so, touch and contact are necessarily the most conclusive factor in determining our structure of our world ... Touch differs from all the other senses in that it always involves the presence, at once and inseparably, of the body that we touch and our body with which we touch it (Gasset, in Montagu, 1978:101).

Visitors to time machine, felt a real impulse or imperative to touch, recalling: 'Immediately you had to touch', and you 'couldn't keep your hands off'. Pulled as if within the magnetic field of the object's power, they had little strength to

resist the urge to touch the object - some felt overpowered by it. When we say we couldn't keep our hands off something, sometimes we mean we have succumbed to interfere or literally meddle in a situation. This was not a desire to interfere however, but to make contact - to touch with tact. Nor was it a curious prodding or an aggressive grabbing; nor even touching with the knowing hand of the curator which weighs and measures. On the contrary, from observation of the video it seemed as if they touched with a gentle inquiring hand, hesitating and stroking softly.

What was it like for them to experience an object which, 'reached out' to them? and, when they beheld an object, what was it which held them or pulled them²³? When Buytenijk(1970), tells us that, 'touching is: being in one's own limits and at the same time going beyond these limits' (1970:122), perhaps it is easier to understand that, as they experienced this pull, it may have been felt as a desire to confirm by touch what had already been experienced by sight. Or, was it a sense of being drawn to probe the mystery evoked by the ancientness of the Egyptian objects? Or even the need to feel 'in touch' by experiencing the sensation of touch - 'a nice sensation', or the sensuous quality of the materials - 'the lovely sensuality of the stone?' Johnson (1997), reveals how fundamental touch is to human beings:

Touch is the most intimate of the senses, the most reciprocal; if you touch, you are, at the same time touched. The whole emotional range can be experienced through touch from love to disgust. Touch is a fundamental element in interpersonal relations and in the relationship of individuals to their environment. Yet it is the most taken for granted. We may lose other senses and adapt but, as Rodaway points out: 'to lose an ability to feel ... is to lose all sense of being in a world, and fundamentally of being at all' (Johnson, in Crafts Council and Authors,1997:295).

The word *feeling* was often expressed by these visitors: 'it was so soft, and it's that sort of feeling'; 'very interesting, the feeling'; 'I feel I can touch'. When this word is used it is helpful to focus on what it is like to feel, in contrast to what it is like to touch. Both words can be used in myriad ways with a fairly wide area of overlap²⁴.

How then can we interpret feeling? When we think phenomenologically about that 'soft feeling' we are led to questions which suggest the sensation of texture. But was it only tactile, experienced outside the skin? Or was it felt

haptically, inside the skin²⁵? Or was it experienced kinæsthetically, by feeling movement? Was it the sort of feeling like an emotional memory - of the softness of muslin bandages which had been wrapped around a grazed leg in childhood?

When two museum visitors encountered Peter Randall Page's sculpture, OUROBOROS (ref. fig. 1.16), one remarked, 'very interesting the feeling - the lovely sensuality of the stone'; at which point the other said, 'you could imagine getting inside it'. While the first phrase tells us that finding something interesting is to be touched or affected by it - literally in its sphere of influence; the second reminds us that the experience was cognitive as well as embodied.

In the example where a museum visitor says, 'I feel I can touch', no one had informed her that she was permitted to touch, but she instinctively felt she could. She was literally *in touch* with the atmosphere which was sympathetic to touching²⁶. Our sense of touch is not only our first sense but is also vital to our 'sense' of being in the world.

The first ideas we become acquainted with, are those of the sense of touch; for the foetus must experience some varieties of agitation, and exert some muscular action, in the womb; and may with great probability be supposed thus to gain some ideas of its own figure, of that of the uterus made of the tenacity of the fluid, that surrounds it ... (Darwin, in Montagu, 1978: 202).

The baby new to earth and sky / What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,/ Has never thought that 'this is I'.

But as he grows he gathers much, / And learns the use of 'I' and 'me',
And finds 'I am not what I see, / And other than the things I touch ...'
(Tennyson, in Montagu, 1978: 201).

These two quotations make us aware that children use different parts of their bodies to explore anything new through touch²⁷. One interviewee claimed that, 'children loved to touch the works and seemed to become much more involved in the process'. The word love has become extremely overused, but in this context it would seem to be strongly meant. The children literally wanted a 'hands on' experience and apparently, as they became wrapped up in this adventure, so their involvement increased.

As an observer, one speaker derived a great deal of pleasure from watching, 'children touch the objects by putting their hands on them'. In fact, she felt it

was wonderful. She experienced this wonder not by touching at 'first hand' but vicariously through the hands of children, literally at 'second hand'. Their delight of touching literally put her 'in touch' with the experience.

In addition to focusing on what it felt like to touch, it is also important to consider what it felt like to hold. When we hold an object what does it feel like? What does it mean to hold something? Does it mean to support, carry, keep safe, not let go or retain? For the artist, Rita Keegan, holding meant all of these and more because the objects were ancient. She says, 'when I was working with the collection, to actually hold 2,000/3,000 year old things in my hand. It was just this hand that did it'. It wasn't just a matter of holding up these ancient objects, she felt held or entranced by them²⁸.

As all the ancient objects were made by hand, the process of holding literally gave people the experience of 'holding hands' with the hands of the person who made the objects. This holding can be expressed as 'touching history' and, the hand which held the objects is heightened in status because of it - the touch had left its mark, by making a connection with the people of the past²⁹.

Just as there simply cannot be a thing without making, 'no object comes to be without the hand that thinks' (Astfalck, in Crafts Council and Authors, 1997: 280). Despite the fact that Keegan's work (ref. fig. 1.9), for time machine was an installation and conceptually based, it was the experience of holding the ancient objects which made the biggest impact upon her. Heidegger (1968), explains how holding and thinking are bound together. He says:

We are trying to learn thinking. Perhaps thinking, too, is just something like building a cabinet. At any rate, it is a craft, a "handicraft". "Craft" literally means the strength and skill in our hands ... Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft. But the craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine ... The hand is all this, and this is the true handicraft. Everything is rooted here that is commonly known as handicraft, and commonly we go no further. But the hand's gestures run everywhere through language, in their most perfect purity precisely when man speaks by being silent. And only when man speaks, does he think - not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes. Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking (Heidegger, 1968:16).

The hand then, is not just the channel through which touch is communicated, it

is the way we think and sense form; it is the way we make and the way we can appreciate. Despite the fact that many of the contemporary works in time machine were conceptual, their use of concrete media shows how ideas and physical objects interact. Here the conceptual is not entirely divorced from the physical because the artists touched the objects in the process of planning/thinking about their exhibit³⁰.

3.2.2 Interpreting the Common Themes: Remembering and Being Placed in Time:

The experience of time machine not only evoked memories, events of times past, times gone by - but, through the imagination, moved people back to the time when the ancient Egyptians were alive³¹.

Beholding an ancient work of art is what sinks its roots into the astonishment, the surprise and the enchantment of light and darkness ... and all this happens through the eye and the touch of the finger (Penone, in *The Artists*, James Putnam and the Museo Egizio, 1995:45).

To behold is to be *held* by what one sees. To behold is, in this sense, to be also *beheld*. Conversely, since the beheld is that which *holds* our gaze - holds it, sometimes, and binds it under a spell, it is also true to say that the beheld is also one beholding. In beholding, though, we are held not only by what we have beheld; we are held at the same time by the entire world of visibility; and ultimately, by the field of its lighting (Levin, 1988:257-258).

These two quotations by Giuseppe Penone (1995)³², an artist who took part in time machine, and the philosopher, David Levin (1988), stand as a bridge between the present and the previous theme in the way that they refer to the phenomenon of beholding. When one man beheld the sand, pebbles and decaying leaves in some ancient sarcophagi by the British artist, Andy Goldsworthy, he was reminded of the story of Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun (Putnam, 1993:38-39). The surprise of the art was not merely that it represented a beautiful arrangement of debris, but that the blending of the old and the new fed this man's imagination, transporting his mind back to that historic event in 1922.

Keegan also felt 'touched by history' in the moment when she handled a paddle doll. As she did so she pictured herself sitting on the banks of the River Nile, making and selling similar toys to the people congregating around an ancient temple. The 'little lines,' perceptible on the doll which showed the mark of the

crafts person, seemed to reverberate with her artistic past and encourage her to identify with a fellow artisan.

Many people were struck by the juxtaposition of the ancient and contemporary works³³ in the way that they drew attention to art produced at both ends of the artistic/temporal spectrum. As a corollary to this, similarities and differences were brought to the fore; visitors experienced time, timelessness, moments in time, splits in time, lengths of time, lifetimes and circles of time. Merleau-Ponty's (1962), chapter on temporality in *Phenomenology of Perception*, is helpful here in the way that it tries to explain what the essence of this elusive phenomenon is. He explains:

To analyse time is not to follow out the consequences of a preestablished conception of subjectivity, it is to gain access, through time, to its concrete structure. If we succeed in understanding the subject, it will not be in its pure form, but by seeking it at the intersection of its dimensions ... For time does not come from the past. It is not the past that pushes the present, nor the present that pushes the future, into being; the future is not prepared behind the observer, it is a brooding presence moving to meet him, like a storm on the horizon ... Time is, therefore not a real process not an actual succession that I am content to record, it arises from *my* relations to things (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:410,411,412).

Numerous visitors to time machine attempted to describe their feelings of time in a similar way. For example, one visitor claimed that, 'the whole feeling is this timelessness'. The ancient Egyptians were, 'in touch with something which is timeless.' She also said, 'He (meaning the artist, Goldsworthy) does have this interest in nature and with very old things, and they give it a continuity and timelessness'. What does she mean here? If something is timeless, can it be detached from any specific time? Could it be eternal? Could it be unaffected by the lapse of time or untouched by the passage of time? Because these ancient works are seen in museums and popular culture are we encouraged to view them as timeless or beyond time? And do we create a 'productive fiction' which suggests that we have a mythical relationship to the ancient Egyptians?

Everyone knows time does not stand still, and that as the years go by and we become older, our bodies bear the marks of age and time but, how difficult is it to comprehend things lasting forever, time going on eternally? Because human life is synonymous with the presence of time, and death, as far as we know, is synonymous with the absence of time - life and time are inextricably linked.

Therefore, perhaps our difficulty in understanding eternity has something to do with our inbuilt sense of not wanting to address our own mortality; we know instinctively that we cannot live forever. This image conjured up by James Joyce (1992), however, helps us understand how this visitor felt about that timelessness which speaks of things going on and on and on ...

You have often seen sand on the seashore. How fine are its tiny grains! And how many of those tiny little grains go to make up the small handful which a child can grasp in its play? Now imagine a mountain of that sand, a million miles high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in thickness; and imagine ... at the end of every million years a little bird came to that mountain and carried away in its beak a tiny grain of that sand. How many millions and millions upon centuries would pass before that bird had carried away even a square foot of that mountain, how many eons upon eons of ages before it had carried away all? Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended. At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity would have scarcely begun (Joyce,1992:142).

As we marvel at the survival of ancient objects over several millennia, are we not also prompted to try to understand the intriguing phenomenon of past, present and future time?

Another exhibit from time machine installed by the artist, Liliane Karnouk (ref. fig. 1.8), gave visitors other ways of thinking about time. In a small side gallery an Egyptian sarcophagus was completely surrounded by iron railings, each one of which supported a large test-tube containing a sprouting date palm. A great many visitors found this exhibit perplexing and one particular visitor was struck by the way the railings 'removed her from the past'. Physically they stood between her and the ancient sarcophagus; she said, 'there's a definite barrier there. You have to step back. It's putting this barrier between you and what you're looking at; and the two are not together'. Then, as if to emphasize this feeling she said, 'It's like a time split, a split in time ...' The fact that the test-tubes were on the outside of the railings emphasized the death/life divide even more. This demarcation indicated by the juxtaposition of the ancient and the contemporary work was not only felt conceptually, but felt physically and emotionally too.

When Keegan (ref. fig. 1.9), assembled her installation, she was playing with notions of time which were strictly conceptual. She spent two years of her life

working on this idea and consequently felt sad when the exhibition's closure was imminent. She observed however, 'it was just, a moment in time'. At the end of the show everything would be dismantled never to be the same again. She therefore experienced in a very poignant way what it was like to have her work, literally *her time*, (which seemed like a lifetime's effort), collapsed into two CD Roms. Her understanding of her own personal time had been juxtaposed with the lifetime or 'real time' of the exhibition, as well as the spiritual time of the ancient Egyptian pair-statue of Kaitep and Hetepheres, which she borrowed from the British Museum's collection.

One visitor who was intrigued with this installation, and especially the mother goddess theme, made the point that, 'The idea of time was based on the goddess, Isis, and her girdle. It seems as if the girdle was like 'time going round the world embracing the different generations'. The word girdle comes from the verb to gird - to encircle, to enclose or confine. Where the construction of motherhood is often associated with caring, though not necessarily limited to it, it is consistent with images of a mother figure embracing and cherishing her young, literally encircling and protecting them. For this visitor, Isis's girdle was felt to represent the care of the goddess as she wrapped herself around generations of children, endlessly supplying support, comfort and love³⁴.

3.2.3 Interpreting the Common Themes: Experiencing the Familiarity of Humanness through Art³⁵:

Many of the interviewees felt a nearness to humanity/'others', when they experienced time machine. Although some of the ancient works had magical, mythological or spiritual meanings, the vast majority were made in either human or animal form. Three quarters of the contemporary works, on the other hand, were conceptually based. As a result, when they were juxtaposed with their ancient counterparts the human aspects of both appeared to be emphasized. For some people this was a welcome relief, especially if they felt unsure of how to go about interpreting the new works. As one visitor said, 'There's a lot of humanity in the Egyptian stuff ... it's so familiar over one's lifetime, one's looked at it over and over again in various places'. The familiar reinforced that feeling of being located, being orientated, and that was

satisfying.

When we feel a familiarity with something there is a sense of knowing it intimately, closely like our family; it also conjures up a sense of belonging which strengthens our identity. The ancient works seemed to belong to the visitor through their familiarity, they also belonged through kinship because they were made by human beings, and were occasionally in human form. 'It's nice because it's got all the feeling of a human form'. The visitor who made this statement clearly experienced the same sense of comfort from recognising that, even though the sculpture was contemporary, it had a structure which was human-like and therefore familiar.

In her interview, as previously stated, Keegan described what it was like to see the mark of a human hand crafted in an ancient paddle doll. This mark had a real poignancy - it not only resonated with her own humanity, but also with her role as an artist. Someone had spent time investing their skills and interest in this object, and it had travelled through time to be part of her experience. There was a sense of togetherness communicated through this mark of humanness and familiarity, which she felt reached out and touched her.

The artist, Kiki Smith, was also touched by the human side of the ancient works. She said, 'We have a relationship to the concerns of the Egyptian people - so it is not so foreign to our daily lives'. Referring to ancient Egyptian funerary objects and the iconography of death and the afterlife, she makes the point that life and death issues were of great concern to them just as they are for us today. Consequently, as we begin to understand the objects in those terms we are brought into nearness and familiarity with the ancient Egyptians.

When contemporary and ancient works were juxtaposed in time machine it was noticeable that numerous tensions came into play. For example, though some people experienced humanness as a contrast between familiarity and strangeness, others experienced it in terms of similarity and difference. Not surprisingly, when this occurred some works appeared comprehensible and meaningful, while others couldn't be understood at all. When the artist, Marc Quinn displayed his work at time machine, he was exploring the idea of

similarity and difference (ref. fig. 1.14); for him, the contrast between human uniqueness and commonality was a perpetual fascination and inspiration. He explains:

Over the last six years bread hands have been a constant feature of my artistic output. Each hand is traced from mine on to bread dough which is then cooked. During the cooking the bread rises in uncontrolled and unpredictable ways rendering each hand unique. Using the lines of the hand as an emblem of destiny these works symbolize the ever evolving complexity of human life, that from the same simple starting point, an infinite variety and unforeseen complexity is possible. Making bread has been a constant human activity since ancient times. It is one of the energies of life, a fuel to be used up daily, yet as the tomb of Kha shows us, capable of surviving the millennia (Marc Quinn, in *The Artists*, James Putnam and the Museo Egizio, 1995:48).

For Quinn, just as every bread hand turned out differently in the baking, every human being is singularly distinctive.

4. REFLECTING ON THIS RESEARCH METHOD - SOME LIMITATIONS:

In my attempt to understand what it was like to experience the exhibition time machine, the collection of the data limited the interpretations of this particular research process³⁶. For example, although I visited this exhibition, I did not encounter it with the interviewees (visitors and contributing artists) and therefore we were not able to co-constitute one another's experience. Consequently, because I only had access to the interviewees from the videotapes, first-hand experience of these people has been lacking. Also, as I did not direct the interviews I was not able to frame the interview questions, ask supplementary questions, respond in a sensitive manner to what was said, develop other lines of inquiry or collect the data (Kvale, 1996:148-149). As a result, I have had to rely on information which revealed what people *thought* of the *idea* of juxtaposing ancient Egyptian and contemporary art, rather than a description of how they *felt* about their encounter with the exhibition. However, despite these restrictions, I have tried to show that, by undertaking an analysis of the interviews, making my biases and prejudices explicit, and interpreting three of the common themes phenomenologically, it has been possible to discover some of the lived meanings of this experience.

5. WRITING - TELLING IT LIKE IT IS:

In this chapter my objectives have been twofold. First, to discover what it was

like for adults to experience the exhibition, time machine; and secondly, to show how an analysis which uses hermeneutic phenomenology as its method, can help to probe this experience, raise pertinent questions about its nature, and suggest how this insight can enrich an understanding of everyday life.

In the process I have begun to learn how to step inside the text of the visitors who described their lived experiences, to explore, 'the irrevocable tension between what is unique and common, between particular and transcendent meaning, and between the reflective and pre-reflective spheres of the lifeworld' (van Manen,1997:346). And already I have discovered by studying adults' experiences of ancient Egyptian and contemporary art that, 'this mysterious culture from far away and long ago is made familiar through its art'(Grzymiski, in Bethune,2000:56). But more than this, while the artefacts have been fascinating, studying the adults has been equally intriguing and revealing. As Grzymiski tells us, 'People find they were just like us' (Grzymiski, in Bethune,2000:56).

6. ORIENTING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION - UNDERSTANDING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN OBJECTS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD:

In the following passage I describe what I felt like when I touched an ancient Egyptian doll (ref. fig. 4.7), for the first time at the Myers Museum in 1999, and how this experience not only encouraged me to look over my shoulder to another time, place and culture, but consider whether the ancient Egyptians were indeed 'just like us'.

The day finally dawned. For two weeks the wooden packing-case had stood by the door expectantly, like a birthday present which had arrived long before the special date. Then, as the lid of the box was opened, I held my breath in wide-eyed suspense. At long last I would see the objects - travellers from the ancient past. However, as the first fragile and intriguing object made its début, I realized nothing could have prepared me for this extraordinary sight. Measuring just over seven centimetres high and standing in all its nakedness - was the most innocent little doll I had ever seen. Its body fashioned from fine linen thread; its hair made from the minutest bright blue faïence beads, stranded together representing delicate curls. Despite the fact that there was no face, no expression, I couldn't help but feel a real tenderness towards it. And, once I had removed the wire around its neck securing it to a glass support, I sensed how helpless it was lying in the palm of my hand. I felt clumsy as the frailty of its limbs brushed against my fingers; felt awkward as I touched its featherweight form. For all its fragility, for all its simple modesty, four thousand years after its original crafting its gentle fibres tugged at my heart strings with phenomenal strength. Why, I wondered, did I feel an overwhelming responsibility to preserve it? Who had cherished this little play-thing so long ago? Had they

felt as protective and caring as I? What had they felt like when they picked it up in the palm of their hand?

The aura of this tiny doll entranced me, not only filling me with a strange sort of reverence and respect, but evoking poignant childhood memories. As I reflected on these thoughts - as if through the eyes of a child - I began to consider what it would be like for primary school children to experience these ancient Egyptian objects³⁷. Would they, I wondered, be stunned and amazed too? Later, as I became curious both to access and understand the experiential meanings of this particular encounter, I decided to choose hermeneutic phenomenology as an appropriate educational research methodology.

In the process of explaining how hermeneutic phenomenology is used as a method of human science research, van Manen (1990), tells the story of Diogenes, the ancient Greek philosopher, who went about with a lighted lantern in broad daylight. Perplexed by this spectacle, a group of people asked him to explain himself, to which he replied: 'Even with a lamp in broad daylight I cannot find a real human being'. Gesturing to themselves, Diogenes chased them away saying: 'It is *real* human beings I want' (Diogenes, in van Manen, 1990:4-5). When human scientists ask, what is the nature of *real human being*? they are trying to shed some light on this matter. Thus, by studying the children's encounters of ancient Egyptian objects, by listening, analyzing and interpreting their statements, gestures and silences, I will try to understand how this experience of ancient art affects them as human beings. Will the children, like Henry Moore, become sensitive to the beliefs, hopes and fears of the ancient Egyptians, by responding in an embodied way to these ancient objects? And by focusing on the children's responses to these objects from the past, will this research help us gain a better understanding of ourselves and other compelling lived experiences³⁸?

Notes:

1. Each time the exhibition, *time machine: Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*, is referred to it will take the form of time machine, in accordance with the catalogue.
2. The word *feel* is italicized here to draw attention to its phenomenological significance.
3. The power of art, and in this case ancient art, to evoke memories and excite the imagination is a recurring theme throughout this study,
4. When I refer to the phenomenon of wonder here in reference to ancient Egyptian objects, I am interpreting it as a totally unfamiliar and unexpected experience which ultimately provokes questioning. Consequently, while it is possible for these objects to be considered *wonderful* as a learnt response through what Marxists might term, 'false consciousness', to encounter them as objects of wonder they would perforce have to be the embodiment of a completely new perceptual experience hitherto unconsidered. It should be acknowledged however, that though wonder can be experienced in a positive way, it can also be experienced negatively. See the section on 'Wonder and Awareness' in Chapter 2.
5. This thesis comprises two different writing styles: first, an academic style supported by theory (often explained in the footnotes), and a phenomenological style which aims to draw upon personal insights in a sensitive way.
6. Though the exhibition time machine was held in the Egyptian sculpture gallery of the British Museum, many of the artefacts sited there, though constructed from various types of stone, would not have been considered by the ancient Egyptians as 'sculpture' in the modern sense. For example, though we may marvel at the craftsmanship and artistry of the Rosetta Stone and various shrines and sarcophagi, they were principally made as objects of use. Moreover, whilst many of the contemporary artists who contributed to time machine exhibited very 'sculptural' pieces, others produced installations or works which either incorporated the ancient artefacts or resonated with them. See pp. 16 - 24 for illustrations of these works.
7. Between 1 December 1995 and 26 February 1995, two employees from the education department of the British Museum videotaped interviews with hundreds of visitors and a number of the contemporary artists who contributed to the exhibition, time machine. For a transcription of one of these interviews see Appendix II.
8. Alexander Mihaylovich's work, *THE COLOSSUS OF MENES* (ref. fig. 1.11), Igor Mitoraj's work, *IRON SHADOWS* (ref. fig. 1.13), and Kate Whiteford's work, *THE FALSE DOOR OF PTAHSHEPSES*, (ref. fig. 1.18), were all monumental in size. See pp. 20, 21 and 24 respectively for images of these works.
9. From evidence on the videotapes Igor Mitoraj's cast iron sculpture, *IRON SHADOWS*, (ref. fig. 1.13), was assumed to be an ancient Egyptian artefact even though nothing on this scale was ever made in cast iron by the ancient Egyptians. Also, while Alexander Mihaylovich's work, *THE COLOSSUS OF MENES* (ref. fig. 1.11), was partly constructed from veneered and galvanised metal, many visitors assumed it to be an ancient artefact.
10. This exhibition is sometimes referred to as an *interventionist* exhibition because different types of art or artefacts are displayed alongside one another. While *interventionist* exhibitions give artists an opportunity of producing work in response to collections, they can take different forms. For example, they may be juxtapositions of site-specific works which are produced for a particular exhibition space thereby setting up dialogues with the objects in a current display; or, they can be rearrangements of objects initiated by the artist to draw out certain ideas or themes from a pre-existing collection. While Andy Goldsworthy's, *SANDWORK*, (ref. fig. 1.5) (*time machine: Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*, 1994), is an example of the first type; Fred Wilson's 1987 exhibition,

11. The process of 'bracketing' is necessary because our understanding is always subject to bias and prejudice which, as we attempt to interpret what people say in a research situation, can inhibit the process of finding meanings. Gadamer's (1975), theory of the 'fusion of horizons' explains how knowledge is constructed. He maintains, that because everyone is embedded in the historical traditions of a particular culture, their understanding will perforce be conditioned by those traditions and culture as a prejudicial or value-laden view of the world. The understanding which results from any human interaction will therefore be a 'fusing of the horizons' of those who communicate. Furthermore, this fusion of ideas or information will always be a 'looking beyond' what has been contributed by the participants (Gadamer,1975:273). Making one's biases or prejudices explicit is therefore a way of exposing one's conditioning and one's position. See Chapter 4, pp. 174 -175.

In terms of my own biases and prejudices, I needed to be aware that this exhibition held a considerable fascination for me. As a student with a long-term interest in art and art history, I not only found the ancient and contemporary art compelling, but was intrigued by the dialogue initiated by their juxtapositions. Furthermore, as a teacher, I could see how valuable this exhibition could be for the promotion of learning from difference. And as a human being, I felt privileged to have the opportunity of gaining an insight into people's thoughts and feelings about the exhibition through the data collected by the BM. To gain a more balanced understanding of this experience therefore, it was important to acknowledge my position as I interpreted the statements of the interviewees.

12. As hermeneutic phenomenologists attempt to access the 'real' or pre-reflective sphere of human experience, they do so by tapping into the 'feeling' or emotional facets of experience. Why, it might be asked, are feelings more revealing about this state than thoughts? Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Heidegger (1973), are clear that as human beings we are unified/interconnected with the world and therefore are an embodiment of the world. During this pre-reflective sphere we have no knowledge of our senses - that is to say, we are unaware, without consciousness. However, when we are drawn out of this unified sphere through reflection, we become conscious of our senses and the way in which they help us determine not merely our own existence and the character of our existence, but our own existence in the context of the world. By tapping into the senses - that is to say - the way we feel - through sight, sound, smell, taste and touch - we attempt to access that sphere where the body and the world form a seamless union.

13. The adjective, 'epiphanic' is used here to indicate a revelation of extraordinary meaning. Like the words, 'mantic' and 'prophetic' it is often used to convey a sense of transformation which the reader may experience as a sudden perception or intuitive grasp of meaning (van Manen,1997:364).

14. Examples of idiomatic phrases from the data collected at time machine are as follows: 'In a nutshell'; 'A moment in time'; '... hitting this audience over the head'.

15. For example, when a number of visitors experienced Marc Quinn's *FROG* installation (ref. fig. 1.15), as a disturbing phenomenon, the fact that they expressed their experience in those terms creates a common theme. The particular way in which each person articulated or interpreted this feeling is part of the essential nature of this experience. 'Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some-'thing' what it is - and without which it could not be what it is' (Husserl, in van Manen, 1990:10).

16. Accounts of lived experience differ from phenomenological descriptions. For example, Rita Keegan's interview is an account of her experience of producing an installation for the exhibition, time machine. See Appendix II. A sensitive phenomenological description, on

the other hand, brings to speech both cognitive and non-cognitive meanings. Thus, while the cognitive aspects of the text point to the meanings of the description, the non-cognitive, or expressive, poetic and intuitive aspects of the text, point out how the meanings have significance for human beings (van Manen, in Vandenberg,1997:62-63).

17. See Note 7 above regarding the collection of data.

18. The interviewer from the British Museum education department, was a man in his twenties who had just completed his MA on the 'Museums and Galleries in Education' course at the Institute of Education, University of London.

19. Van Manen defines the life-world existentials as, 'helpful guides for reflection in the research process: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relations (relationality or communality) ... these four existentials can be differentiated but not separated' (van Manen,1992:101,106).

20. Other works which could be touched were: the sarcophagi containing Andy Goldsworthy's *LEAFWORK*, *SANDWORK* and *STONWORK* (ref. figs. 1.2, 1.5, 1.6). David Hiscock's *BAR-CODE* (ref. fig. 1.7); Liliane Karnouk's *INSTALLATION* (ref. fig. 1.8); Rita Keegan's *INSTALLATION* (ref. fig. 1.9); Alexander Mihaylovich's *COLOSSUS OF MENES* (ref. fig. 1.11); Igor Mitoraj's sculpture's *ECLIPSE* and *IRON SHADOWS* (ref. figs. 1.12, 1.13); Marc Quinn's *FROG* (ref. fig. 1.15); and Kate Whiteford's, *FALSE DOOR OF PTAHSHEPSES* (ref. fig. 1.18).

21. Words which were emphasized by the interviewees are underlined.

22. For a discussion of S.J. Lederman's scientific research on touch, and specifically on the haptic response, see Chapter 2, pp.76-78. An early work entitled, *The Nature of Creative Activity*, by Löwenfeld (1939), describes this type of sensation: 'the world of those who "see haptically" is a world confined to things that can be perceived by means of our senses of touch or bodily sensations. In this world the eye does not mediate between reality and the concept' (Löwenfeld,1939:85).

23. David Levin, (1988), the philosopher, also discusses holding and makes the connection between beholding and being-held-by the object of our gaze. See p.38 above and Chapter 6, p.277 for a fuller discussion of Levin's explanation.

24. Though all the senses stand at the crossroads between consciousness and unconsciousness and are vital contributors to a sense of being in the world, the sense of touch is the one which allows the embodiedness of human being to be validated more immediately and absolutely (Johnson, in Crafts Council, 1997: 295). This is why touching and feeling objects is not only crucial for the museum experience of time machine, but for this study as a whole.

How do the meanings of the terms touching and feeling compare? When we touch/feel an object we may point to its qualities - its angular shape, its heaviness, its bulk, but we may also point out what that shape, heaviness and bulk means to us personally (Gadamer, in van Manen,1990:26). It is particularly this pointing out which affects us or touches us - which enables the feel of it to be made significant for us. Thus, it is only by touching and feeling that we know what it feels like, and concomitantly how that feeling helps us redefine ourselves.

25. Again, see Chapter 2 pp. 74, 76-78, for a discussion of the haptic sense as researched by Lederman and Klatzky.

26. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 ideas of empathic and empathetic responses are explored in relation to the sensation of touching ancient Egyptian objects.

27. See Chapter 2, Note 31 for Jerome Bruner's(1969), discussion of the way in which young children explore through the means of touch.

28. See Chapter 6 for a discussion of being captivated/fascinated/entranced by ancient objects.

29. See Chapters 6 and 7 for interpretations of children's experiences of being 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians during handling sessions.

30. For example: Rita Keegan's installation (ref. fig. 1.9), which dealt with issues of different types of time, used ancient Egyptian artefacts, personal memorabilia, incense, CD Roms and CCTV. See Appendix II.

31. For a description and interpretation of the way children articulated their experiences of ancient Egyptian objects in temporal terms, see Chapters 5 and 6.

32. The contemporary artist, Giuseppe Penone, like Francesco Clemente, Brian Eno, Mimmo Paladino, Kiki Smith and Kan Yasuda, contributed work(s) to time machine when it transferred to Turin in 1995. Eight of the original twelve artists from time machine at The British Museum, re-exhibited their work there (The Artists, James Putnam and the Museo Egizio, Turin, 1995:11).

33. See Note 10 above.

34. The visitor who expressed these thoughts about the goddess, Isis, had been influenced by information on Rita Keegan's CD Rom which was part of her installation. Isis was worshipped as the 'great magic' who had protected her son Horus from snakes, predators and other dangers; thus she would protect mortal children also' (Lurker,1974:72).

35. While Williams, (1983), discusses the meanings of *humanity*, *humanist*, *humanism* and *humanitarian*; and *family* and *familiarity*, he also explains how the meanings which we ascribe to the words we use are contingent upon temporal and cultural factors. For example, in terms of 'family' he explains that while the traditional Latin root of *familia* meant household, and *familius* meant servant, this reflects a time when a family was not just a group of blood relatives, it also encompassed the family servants. To be familiar with someone or something indicated an association underpinned by friendship or habitual use (Williams,1983:131-4).

In terms of humanity, the Latin root *Homo*, *hominis* means man, and *humanus* meaning belonging to man. While the word humane used to mean those distinct characteristic of the human species i.e. human nature, human language and human reason, it now has a more specialized definition meaning kind, gentle, courteous and sympathetic. During the Renaissance the word humanity or humanities developed another meaning from the Latin *humanitas*. This meant a particular kind of learning based initially on the classics, and later included literature and philosophy, which was distinct from divinity. Thus a humanist was a student of human, as distinct from divine matters. Humanism, which developed from an abstract sense of humanity, had a number of interpretations one of which was an atheistic, agnostic position in contrast to a religious stance (Williams,1983:148-151). However, Bullock and Trombley(1999), summarize humanism as: 'a broad tendency, a dimension of thought and belief within which are found very different ideas, held together not by a unified structure but by certain common assumptions. The two most important of these are: first, the belief that human beings have a potential value in themselves, and that it is respect for this which is the source of all other human values and rights; and second, the rejection of any system of thought which despairs of man and denies meaning to human life' (Bullock and Trombley,1999:406).

36. Kvale (1996), and Holstein and Gubrium (1997), are helpful in the way they clarify both

the interview procedure and the interpretive scenario. Unlike my experience of interpreting the data of time machine, both presuppose interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees.

Kvale (1996), lists ten important factors for interviewing, namely: being knowledgeable about the significant aspects and issues of the topic under investigation; being able to structure the interview by introducing, developing and concluding the process; being clear by posing simple, unambiguous questions distinctly; being gentle and patient by allowing the interviewee time to express themselves; being sensitive by listening out for what is said, how it is said as well as what is not said; being open and flexible by allowing the interviewee scope to articulate new ideas; being able to steer the interview away from digressions; being critical by asking appropriate supplementary questions to check information or obtain further clarity; being able to recall information which has been said; and finally, being able to interpret what has been said for further clarification (Kvale, 1996:148-149).

Echoing Gadamer's (1975), 'fusion of horizons', Holstein and Gubrium (1997), say that though interviews were thought to be a direct way of collecting knowledge, influence from poststructuralist, postmodernist, constructionist and ethnomethodological inquiries have pointed to the naïvety of this assumption. Instead, they indicate that, 'meaning is socially constituted; [and] all knowledge is created from the actions undertaken to obtain it. Treating interviewing as a social encounter in which knowledge is constructed suggests the possibility that the interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but is instead a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge itself' (Holstein and Gubrium, in Silverman, 1997:113-114). See Chapter 4 for further discussion of these issues.

37. Whilst I was employed as a curatorial assistant at the Myers Museum of Egyptian Art, Eton College, for the duration of the exhibition, *The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College, 1999-2000*, I was able to formulate an educational programme for local primary school children in addition to researching their experience.

38. In the process of understanding primary school children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects, I will address both the nature of understanding, and what is significant about that understanding. In regard to the first of these issues, I have already stated that understanding is not an objective or free-floating exercise; rather, it is historically and culturally conditioned and therefore subject to the prejudices and values of both the researcher and the researched (Gadamer, 1975:273). Second, with reference to the significance of understanding, this study attempts, through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, to determine the particular human facets of the children's experience without which it couldn't be what it is. Heidegger tells us that when we become aware of ourselves as *Dasein* or *there-being* we do so through states-of-mind - joy, fear, angst etc., understanding and discourse. Furthermore as we become aware of being *with* others we automatically understand what it is to *care* (Heidegger, 1973:224-225). Thus, through a combination of states of mind, understanding and discourse I will endeavour to become aware of the children's experience as a human experience. However, it remains to be seen whether the children will resonate with the beliefs, hopes and fears of the ancient Egyptians, as Henry Moore indicates (Moore, in James, 1992:157). I am not suggesting that the children will know what the ancient Egyptians thought when they interact with their objects, but I am positing the idea that there might be similarities of human feeling. This position is described by Dissanayake (1992), as species-centric. She asserts:

Whereas it is usual to think of human nature as being the product of gods, societies and cultures, the species-centric position takes the reverse view: it holds that gods, societies and cultures are the products, the answers and embodiments of the species needs and potentials of an already existing human nature ... cultures and their institutions, practices, and artifacts - different though they be - are means of satisfying fundamental needs. And what these needs are, as well as a broader range of workable satisfactions, is to be discovered by accepting the reality that humanity is the underlying landscape upon which one approaches (but not with which one replaces) the

humanities. Both have made us what we are (Dissanayake,1995:5,8).

By exploring the children's experience of ancient Egyptian objects I hope to discover this underlying landscape, and trust that it will have relevance for primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.

See also Chapter 7 p.322-323 for Peter Lee's (1984), discussion of the role of empathy in the process of interpreting historical evidence which resonates with this position.

CHAPTER TWO
A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

At the end of the Chapter 1, I briefly described how I formulated an educational programme for local primary school children at the Myers Museum, whilst working on the exhibition, *The Collector's Art : Ancient Egypt at Eton College 1999-2000*. I also explained how my observations of the children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects, coupled with my increasing interest in hermeneutic phenomenology, led me to investigate this particular experience from a phenomenological perspective¹. As part of this process, this chapter discusses relevant research and theory, taken from articles in academic and professional journals and books and chapters in edited books, drawing upon philosophy, art history, art theory, and museum, art and aesthetic education. In addition, areas where there was a paucity of information are identified, and suggestions which indicate how this research aims to fill the gaps in the existing literature are made².

Initially, I assumed that by studying the children's three museum activities of sketching, treasure hunting and handling the ancient objects, I would be covering every aspect of their encounter³. However, it soon became apparent that merely to investigate how they looked, mused, wondered, imagined, touched and discussed the objects would be to overlook the way they reacted to the museum context and the people who were sharing their experience. To address all the aspects of this complex phenomenon therefore, this review of literature has been divided into two chapters: the first discusses how children become aware of objects; and the second focuses on the museum as a pedagogic and research context.

Because visiting a museum/gallery can be stimulating for children, this chapter concentrates on *awareness*. However, to approach an understanding of awareness in children it is important to contextualize them within the current landscape of visual culture. Accordingly, a review of texts which take visual literacy as their subject, are discussed. A section which investigates the

theoretical components of awareness follows, after which the phenomena of wonder, multi-sensory experiences and 'aesthetic'⁴ experiences are explored. Sections which highlight the sense of touch, touching objects, and touching objects in museums, are then included, before a final discussion of the ways in which children express their awareness of museum objects through their thoughts and feelings.

Whilst this chapter attempts to study a particular lived experience from existing literature, it also touches upon a number of philosophical issues which question what is real; how the real becomes reality as a conceptualisation of the interconnection between human beings and the world; and the changing role of art⁵ as an expression of, or reflection upon, this symbiosis.

1. AWARENESS - TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VISUAL:

1.1 Framing the Visual Today:

The research report entitled, *Visual Literacy - Framing Visual and Verbal Experience*, by Karen Raney (1997), has been included here to contextualize children's experiences of contemporary visual culture, thereby enabling me to move towards a greater understanding of their museum experience.

Situating her research Raney (1997), suggests the boundaries between art, digital technology/information and the media have become progressively blurred since the 1960s, fuelling numerous debates (1997:7). To discuss these issues a group of twenty seven interviewees including artists, curators, teachers, visual historians and theorists took part in taped conversations during which they responded to fourteen questions about visual literacy. These covered the nature of visual literacy - what it is, how it comes about and the attributes of a visually literate person; the links between visual literacy, skills, creativity and imagination; whether visual literacy can help determine the aesthetic criteria for quality; how digital technology relates to visual literacy; how words and images create meaning; and how visual literacy relates to research and theory (1997:11-12).

Though Raney (1997), focuses exclusively on contemporary visual culture, she makes observations which have relevance for educating children to interpret

or read visual culture per se. Moreover, she mentions that the National Curriculum for Art acknowledges the shift from verbal to visual means of communication, and recommends that children should aim for visual literacy to help them navigate through the world of visual culture (1997:8,17). In what ways then, can visual literacy equip children with the skills to make them more critically aware of the world?

To answer this question I want to refer to a definition of visual literacy which Raney advocates (1997). Visual literacy is ...

A group of vision competences a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competences is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visual actions, objects and/or symbols, natural and man-made, that are encountered in the environment. Through the creative use of these competences we are able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competences we are able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communications (Fransecky and Dedes, in Raney, 1997:14).

According to this definition, visual literacy involves the acquisition and development of visual skills (both making and interpreting) through the use and integration of the senses. Raney(1997), tells us that these skills involve gaining a familiarity with traditions and conventions, critical analysis, perceptual discrimination; drawing on personal associations, imagination, aesthetic experience, physical and technical abilities, and cultural habits (1997:20). However, to acquire these skills takes time and children should be made aware that looking doesn't guarantee understanding; furthermore, because looking habits can be taught and learnt, they are ideologically charged, socially mediated and culturally transmitted. Education should therefore concern itself with discovering what triggers children's curiosity, and encourage them to ask questions and enter into discussions, to gain a deeper understanding of their complex and individual visual experiences (1997:24,25). This informative report raises issues about the strategies for interrogating visual experience through research. I will refer to it again when the discussion focuses on the verbal aspects of children's museum experiences.

1.2 Awareness - Experiencing Visual Culture Today:

Three other writers who help to give added insight into the contemporary

cultural climate which co-constitutes the children in my study, are Wolfgang Iser (1997), Paul Duncan (1999) and Jean Baudrillard (1983). In *Undoing Aesthetics* (1997), Iser argues that, because 'the aestheticization of everyday life' is now commonplace, a self-consciously aesthetic approach permeates more aspects of our existence. In consequence, 'aesthetics has lost its character as a special discipline relating solely to art, and become a broader and more general medium for the understanding of reality' (Iser,1997:ix). This has a direct bearing not only on the children's approach to ancient objects, but is equally relevant to the way that this experience is perceived by the researcher. In consequence, every child, like everyone who visited the museum, was not only a part of being in the world, but being in an *aesthetic* world.

Though Duncan's(1999), article, *A Case for an Art Education of Everyday Aesthetic Experiences*, takes a similar line, he asserts that signs and images which emanate from shopping malls, theme parks, advertising, tourism, the Internet and television are far more influential in structuring people's vision of the world and themselves than experiences of high art. He asks, 'is one's perception of the world likely to be formed mostly through relatively unusual and isolated events like a gallery visit, however striking, or through very common and oft repeated experiences like television viewing' (1999:296-297)? Furthermore, by being steeped in language and visual imagery our experiences become part of the dynamics of an ever-changing world dominated by technological innovation, economic imperatives and capital circulation. He maintains, 'Reality has become images ... the real is being transformed into signs and images. Instead of images colonising reality, reality is transformed' (1999:306). At a time prior to the existence of new media and specifically electronic media, perception was mediated more directly through sensation and cognition. Nowadays, it is mediated through a host of visual images which bombard our existence⁶.

In a practical way Duncan(1999), suggests using various strategies to negotiate everyday aesthetic sites. These include: acknowledging the way we use aesthetics ourselves; entering into conversations with our pupils and drawing on their knowledge to make ourselves better informed; embracing the fluidity of

contemporary aesthetic sites; and adopting a critical attitude which questions the beliefs and values underpinning aesthetic choices and manifestations (1999:309-310).

Duncan's(1999), forthright description demonstrates how children are situated within the current visual environment, and contends that, though many children share a lot of knowledge about visual culture, this knowledge can be fetishistic and ephemeral. He suggests therefore, that students need the help of mature adults to develop a critical perspective towards the values inherent in their everyday aesthetic landscape (1999:310).

In his essay entitled, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Jean Baudrillard (1983), writes about the way in which our current existence is dominated by screens and electronic media. He suggests:

There is a problem here, however, to the extent that this electronic 'encephalization' and miniaturization of circuits and energy, this transistorization of the environment, relegates to total uselessness, desuetude and almost all that used to fill the scene of our lives. It is well known how the simple presence of the television changes the rest of the habitat into a kind of archaic envelope, a vestige of human relations whose very survival remains perplexing (Baudrillard, in Foster,1983:129).

Although this essay was written twenty years ago, at the dawn of what we now regard as the 'computer age', it conveys a prescience which has contemporary relevance. For, our private and public spaces have not only been invaded by circuits, networks and information, but they have created 'a state of fascination and vertigo linked to this obscene delirium of communication', which has ushered in a situation where we are 'now only a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence' (Baudrillard, in Foster 1983:132-3). Whilst Baudrillard's colourful language may resonate with adults who notice (and maybe abhor) the difference between life now, and life as it was prior to the digital revolution, it is important to acknowledge that primary school children have never known anything *other* than a world dominated by visual imagery. Thus, reality for them includes not merely media-generated imagery, but the so-called 'virtual reality' produced by digital technology. In the light of contemporary social reality, it will be interesting to observe how the children encounter the reality of ancient three-dimensional objects in the museum. Having described the current climate of contemporary culture, I now want to

investigate the phenomenon of awareness itself to try to understand what it is like for children to encounter ancient objects.

1.3 Awareness: a Relationship between Sensation, Imagination and Perception:

The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines perception as: ‘the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses’; also, ‘a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression’ (Pearsall and Hanks, 2001:1377). However, while this definition regards the senses and the way in which they are interpreted as crucial for perception, Merleau-Ponty’s (1962), theory is markedly different. He contends that perception is an immediate way in which our bodies and the world are co-constituted; and, as a state which is preconscious and precedes knowledge, it is more a direction than a function (1962:ix, 12). He says, ‘the world is not what I think but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it: it is inexhaustible. “There is a world”, or rather: “There is the world”; I can never completely account for this ever-reiterated assertion in my life’ (1962:xvi-xvii). For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not a state of conscious knowing, it happens prior to awareness. Consequently, once we become conscious or aware of the world and ourselves through the senses, our state of knowing becomes merely a representation of perception and not perception itself. However, if perception happens pre-reflectively, is it possible to know what it is? Merleau-Ponty argues that the symbolic process of language can help but, as medium and message, it cannot guarantee to establish the truth, because interpretations and understanding are always relative (1962:xiv). It is not surprising therefore, that there is a difference in the way that Mary Warnock (1976), Kieran Egan (1992), and James Elkins (1996), explain awareness, and the roles which sensation, imagination and perception play in that process.

When considering these differing positions four issues were seminal: first, defining the terms sensation, perception, and the imagination (which seemed to be a particularly complex phenomenon); second, determining how they function; third the significance of feeling and reason in the process of awareness; and finally how all these ideas contribute to an understanding of

‘reality’.

In Warnock’s(1976), philosophical text *Imagination*, she not only reviews the theories of Hume, Kant, Schelling, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Sartre and Wittgenstein, but tries to bring out the connections between the different functions of the imagination. Drawing heavily on Hume⁸, she expounds the view that the imagination fulfils an intermediary role between sensation and perception. She explains:

Imagination is our means of interpreting the world, and it is also our means of forming images in the mind. The images themselves are not separate from our interpretations of the world; they are our way of thinking of the objects in the world. We see the forms in our mind’s eye and we see these very forms in the world. We could not do one of these things if we could not do the other. The two abilities are joined in our ability to understand that the forms have a certain meaning, that they are always significant of other things beyond themselves. We recognise a form as a form of something, as Wittgenstein said, by its relations with other things. It seems to me both plausible and convenient to give the name ‘imagination’ to what allows us to go beyond the barely sensory into the intellectual or thought-imbued territory of perception ⁹ (Warnock,1976:194-5).

However, while the imagination enables us go beyond the barely sensory, constructs images in the mind, and makes sense of the world perceptually, it is not just a cognitive exercise, it involves feeling too. Writing about the power of perception, Warnock (1976), suggests, ‘Its impetus comes from the emotions as much as from the reason, from the heart as much as from the head’ (1976:196).

In her chapter on, *The Nature of the Mental Image*, Warnock (1976), discusses the imagination from a phenomenological perspective, and focuses on Jean Paul Sartre’s theories in particular. However, though she claims an interpretive role for the imagination, as it ascribes significance or meaning to the experience of real or invented objects, Sartre keeps perception and imagination entirely separate. According to Sartre, when the imagination is directed towards an object, the image it forms is itself nothing; it is a kind of consciousness or way of thinking - a kind of ‘quasi-observation’ which is impoverished because it has no substance of its own. It is an image which we construct spontaneously and actively, knowing that it is different from the ‘real’ object. Perception, on the other hand, happens at a more immediate level (as Merleau-Ponty(1962), had explained) - it is passive and does not assemble images from sensations (Sartre, in Warnock,1976:162-163).

Though Warnock (1976), and Egan(1992), discuss awareness by reviewing a range of philosophical theories, Egan's survey is set within an historical framework. Assessing the ideas from ancient Greek scholars to the present day, Egan identifies the problems associated with differing concepts and functions of the imagination. For example, he contends that the imagination can help us to think of the world as being consistent with our perceptions, in addition to conceiving the world as other than it is. Therefore it has the flexibility to both represent reality and generate novelty or even phantasies(1992:36)¹⁰. This would tend to suggest that Egan agrees with Warnock in thinking that the imagination heightens our perceptions and accords meaning to them. However, although Egan agrees with Warnock's contention that the emotions play a significant role here, he does not agree that the imagination has an intermediary role; rather, he supports Sartre and Wittgenstein who believed that the imagination is a conscious intentional activity (1992:38).

While Egan (1992), admits that the imagination can help us to think with flexibility, variety and richness, he is not prepared to detach these thoughts from rationality (1992:43). In a sense it is this 'going beyond' which highlights the different ways of being conscious of objects. Sartre makes this clearer by explaining that while we 'receive' things anew via perception, the imagination can only generate things we already know. This imaginative process 'is not an empirical and superadded power of consciousness however, it is the whole of consciousness as it realises its freedom'¹¹(Sartre in Egan,1992: 29).

These differing accounts reveal the conceptual minefield occupied by the senses, the imagination and perception in awareness; and, as with previous philosophical explanations, they demonstrate how theory can be impoverished when it isn't grounded in lived experience¹². Notwithstanding, though my research will not attempt to theorise awareness, or even 'aesthetic' awareness, from a child's perspective, it is beneficial to consider these ideas as possible explanations of how we might make sense of the world.

Before discussing wonder and awareness however, I want to look briefly at Elkins' (1996), eclectic view of awareness. Drawing ideas from art history,

philosophy, psychology, biology, physiology and technology, he writes from a phenomenological perspective. Focusing specifically on visual experiences of objects, Elkins comments on the ways in which looking takes place; the feeling of being seen as objects stare back; seeing too much; seeing bodies; seeing faces, and not seeing or blindness. Ultimately he comes to the conclusion that seeing is inconsistent, irrational and undependable. He maintains:

Seeing is like hunting and like dreaming, and even like falling in love. It is entangled in the passions - jealousy, violence, possessiveness; and it is soaked in affect - in pleasure and displeasure, and in pain. Ultimately, seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer. Seeing is metamorphosis, not mechanism (Elkins,1996:11-12).

Seeing then, is a process which is intentional, it involves feelings and emotions¹³ and it changes the way we think of the world and ourselves. It is a complicated process which is never objective, never complete and often mysterious and perplexing (1996:29,44).

When Elkins(1996), describes how seeing is programmed to seek out parts of the human anatomy in terms of eyes, faces and bodies, there is a resonance with Merleau-Ponty's (1962), theory of embodiment. For instance, Elkins argues that every object has a presence; it can stare back and, even though we may be unaware of its invisible web, in a sense we are held captive or captivated by it. 'Each object has a certain force - a way of resisting or accepting my look and returning that look to me' (1996:70). In addition, it is vital for a sense of personal identity that we can both see ourselves reflected in a mirror, and meet the gazes of those to whom we speak and care for - literally to see ourselves being seen. In fact, this need is so strong that even vague representations of eyes wherever they occur have a magnetic pull (1996:76).

Turning his attention to faces, Elkins (1996), argues they are centres of power - they can attract, petrify and transfix, creating sense and meaning through expression. Furthermore when we understand each other we rely on facial movement, and as we scan faces for signs it almost feels like touching. More than this though, when we look at a face we need to be able to make sense of what we see as a way of attributing wholeness and coherence to the mind of the person behind the face; it is only then that a match can be made between vision and thought(1996:182).

In a similar way, Elkins (1996), points out that when seeing bodies we have a strong desire for wholeness, so much so that if only part of a body is discerned the mind automatically attempts to make up the difference¹⁴. Moreover, once detected it seems important for the body to move and come alive (1996:132). And, on the occasions when vague (that is to say non-human) images are observed, our eyes are programmed to read bodily forms into them(1996:129).

Taking this idea further Elkins (1996), explores seeing as a metaphor for thinking, and addresses the role of the imagination. For him seeing and thinking are one. When you see you are aware that you see; however, if you look and do not see (as in a trance) then this is a failure to think. He maintains:

The more I think about blindness, the more it seems to be a failure of thinking as much as vision. Since the Greeks, thinking and seeing have begun together, at the same moment in imagination. If I think about something, I reflect upon it: that is, I imagine myself and the thought reflecting each other. It seems that thinking is imagining - and as the word suggests, the imagination is a place inhabited by images (Elkins,1996:224).

This well-researched theoretical text which is rich in illustrations provides another approach to the phenomenon of visual awareness revealing what it is like to look at the world of objects. Though it chose a contemporary perspective which excluded objects from other historical periods and other cultures, it is insightful and relevant to my research. I now want to address what it is like to become wonderstruck by unfamiliar objects and unfamiliar experiences.

1.4 Wonder and Awareness:

Martin Heidegger (1984), Philo Hove (1996), (2001), and Thomas Ewens (1990), all testify that, as early as the fifth century BC, the ancient Greeks claimed that wonder lay at the heart of philosophy. Citing Socrates' words in Plato's(c.429-347), *Theætetus*, Ewens says, 'Wonder, is the feeling (mood) (pathos) of the philosopher and philosophy begins in Wonder. Wonder unsettles life, opens us to another dimension of the everyday world, namely to its being-full-of-wonder' (Ewens,1990:7).

In his philosophical analysis of the nature of wonder, Heidegger (1984), initially compares it to amazement, astonishment, admiration and marvelling. He states that, while all the latter are characterised as observations of the significantly unusual, it is only wonder which compels us to question what is

true. He then continues to describe the characteristics of wonder in thirteen points, making several references to ‘beings as beings’ as the most wondrous. Furthermore, he explains how understanding wonder involves a form of suffering, which transforms the questioner so that he or she is released into his/her own essence¹⁵ as a by-product of the inquiry. ‘The grasping is a suffering as a transformation of man’ (1984:154). However, Heidegger warns against the temptation to reflect on wonder as a personal need rather than *the* need to question after the ‘essence of truth’¹⁶(1984:161).

From the above it is evident that Heidegger (1984), posits wonder as the focus and driving force which motivates people to strive towards an understanding of themselves, not only as beings in the world, but as beings in relationship with the world. One way in which we encounter the wonder of the world is through art which, as Heidegger says, ‘is the *one* essential grounding of the essence of truth’¹⁷ (1984:164). Heidegger’s exegesis is important therefore for drawing attention to the significance of this point of contact as a catalyst for questioning¹⁸. Whilst Heidegger’s comments are enlightening, they focus on specialized experiences of ‘high’ art, rather than everyday experiences of wonder. By taking statements from children my research endeavours to describe what it is ‘really like’ to experience the wonder of ancient objects.

Hove (1996), on the other hand, includes numerous examples of wonder taken from accounts of ‘lived experience’¹⁹. The following excerpt demonstrates how the essential characteristics of wonder crystallise quite spontaneously.

A young boy moves down the densely wooded slope towards the river ... In this light the world is only half awake ... A flicker of colour ... *shshsh* ... What’s that? His open mouth suddenly draws a short breath. His heart jumps as he sees it. (Snake!) In a frozen instant it crosses his path a short distance ahead. The youngster stands fast, excited to the very edge of belief ... before he knows it the snake has soundlessly disappeared. ‘A snake! What ... what was it doing? What if it bit me?’ ... another question emerges: ‘How does he ... *move*?’(Hove,1996:444).

By demonstrating how wonder can leave one stunned and incredulous, Hove (2001), also explains how it can happen in an, ‘*unexpected flash*’ as an inversion of the apparent and familiar. Drawing on Barthes’ (1981), notion of the ‘punctum’, Hove tells us, ‘I do not find it; somehow in its sharpness and startling reach it finds me’ (Barthes, in Hove, 2001:6).

Other significant characteristics of wonder are described by Hove (2001): for example, it can often leave us speechless (2001:9,18); literally stop us in our tracks (2001:11), and leave us feeling exposed and vulnerable (2001:13). Furthermore, it can often put us into intimate contact with the world in a passive way leaving us changed and at a loss to know how it happened (2001:19 - 21). Like Heidegger (1984), Hove (2001), makes the point that, 'a question borne from wonder draws upon the depths of one's encounters with the world; such questions of wonder ('true wondering') seem to call most immediately for acknowledgement, appreciation' (2001:14).

Hove's (1996,2001), thorough and well-illustrated descriptions of wonder make his texts both accessible and instructive; however, I am left wondering if children's experiences of wonder are the same as adults'; and whether the experiences of natural wonders are different from the wonder of experiencing objects.

Though Ewen's (1990), text aims principally to give practical help to art educators, his discussion of wonder is firmly grounded in philosophy. His three essential points are: first, that the wonder of being should be acknowledged; second, that the wonder of childhood should be celebrated and nourished; and lastly, that wonder lies at the centre of every 'aesthetic'²⁰ experience (1990:7). In addition, he explains that the fundamental role of every art teacher/educator should be like a midwife, who, by mediating between the wonder of the child and the wonder of the world, helps it bring its ideas and art to life (1990:7).

Drawing on Plato's(c.429-347BC), *Theætetus*, Ewens (1990), stresses that wonder not only seizes and disorients us, but also tells us that this seizure is something which is experienced by the whole of our being - sensually, intellectually and emotionally(1990:8). To be moved by this experience literally moves us to find out why it does so. And, because the experience of wonder has the capacity to disorient, it has the power to make us feel literally 'outside ourselves - ex-static ... wonder is, in a sense, out of this world' (1990:9). Ewens (1990), also draws on the work of Heidegger: first, by explaining that the wonder of the world emerges as we intersect with the world - it is just there as *Da-sein*, there being;

and by distinguishing between the ontological wonder of 'Being' - as a primordial phenomenon in the sense of existing, and ontic wonder - as a phenomenon *of* 'Being' in terms of the nature of that existence (Heidegger, in Ewens,1990:8-9). While Ewens' (1990), text doesn't specifically focus on children's experiences with objects, it is concise and informative in the way that it discusses both the essential aspects of wonder and the ways in which it relates to art, and the teaching of art. All these texts explain not merely how wonder can be experienced and how fundamental it is to questioning being in the world, but how this questioning is a kind of suffering which changes the wonderer.

1.5 Awareness - Experiencing 'The Immediately Sensuous':

In the 1970s two art education scholars, Merle Flannery (1973,74,77), and Duke Madenfort(1972,73), began to research into the 'the immediately sensuous' as a phenomenon of wonder²¹. Drawing heavily on the pioneering work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), they explored not only what it was like to experience wonder at the level of the 'immediately sensuous', but attempted to explain how this sensuous engagement with the world was an experience of the 'real'. I shall now consider some of these texts to discover how a mediation between the 'immediately sensuous' and the embodied self impinges upon my research.

Flannery (1973), suggests that when human beings experience the world they do so on both a sensory level, whereby sensation is conceptualised creating objective reality, and also on a sensuous level where the body fuses with the world pre-consciously (1973:10-11). She also claims that to have an 'immediately sensuous' encounter the body is opened up to a whole keyboard of human feeling as a synæsthetic, non-productive, multi-faceted and multi-layered experience(1977:10,19). However, when children engage with the 'immediately sensuous', their behaviour may become so weird, careless, messy, irritating or even embarrassing, that adults can be inclined to suppress it. And moreover, if this happens regularly a child's emotional growth will be stunted leading to numbness or anæsthesia(1977:20).

Like Flannery (1973,74,77), Madenfort (1972,73), describes two different ways of

interacting with the world, namely by, reflection and conceptualization; and an embodied engagement with the 'immediately sensuous'. He explains that, during an 'immediately sensuous' experience the senses enter into communion with the phenomenon on a synergetic level; and, as they overlap and resonate with one another, the body and the world interpenetrate. Furthermore, it is on this level that the world becomes an embodiment of the person, and vice versa (1972:6,11,13). Thus, while Madenfort maintains that sensuous experiences happen in an active and pre-conceptual way at the level of 'singing and dancing' the world, to conceptualize or analyse an experience is therefore not to *live* it (1973:10). Although these texts do not focus specifically on museum environments, they explain how the wonder of new experiences derives its 'aesthetic' impact from an 'immediately sensuous' engagement with the world.

Interestingly, though Merleau-Ponty (1962), does not use the terms 'aesthetic' or 'immediately sensuous', he does emphasize the nature of sense experience from a phenomenological stance. Consequently it is appropriate to refer to his ideas on perception and embodiment as they directly inform the theories of the two previous scholars.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1962), explains how perception occurs in a bodily way pre-consciously and pre-conceptually, where the world is already there for us and we are part of that world (1962:ix). In his view:

My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension' ... it is not only an object among all other objects, a nexus of sensible qualities among others, but an object which is sensitive to all the rest, which reverberates to all sounds, vibrates to all colours, and provides words with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:235-6).

However, to become aware of this 'real' level of existence requires the use of the senses and, as we become consciously aware of the world we simultaneously become aware of ourselves²²; 'I live from within', he says (1962:220). It is that moment of awareness characterized by reflection which is experienced rather like wonder. For, just as we begin to know we begin to question and, despite being resolved to find an understanding, we find the explanation eludes us. According to Merleau-Ponty, this tantalising scenario is not the 'real' but

reality. 'What makes the 'reality' of the thing is therefore precisely what snatches it from our grasp'(1962:233). Thus, perception happens when we are in a seamless communion with the world where all the senses are interconnected. However, to have knowledge of the senses involves objectification, and precisely because knowledge cannot be lived spatially and temporally, it ceases to lay claim to the 'real' (1962:217).

These references, taken from Merleau-Ponty's (1962), work, attempt to propose a theory of embodied perception which is crucial for understanding human being in the world. Though originally written in French, the text challenges the reader to wrestle with ideas which relate perception to an understanding of not merely particular experiences but every experience. In the process he addresses notions of essence and existence by questioning a taken-for-granted understanding of what is 'real' and what is 'reality'.

While this research does not aim to make causal connections between the perceptions of the children in my study and the ancient objects, it does nevertheless want to investigate the pre-reflective meanings of this experience and interpret them. This text is indispensable therefore, in helping to explain the concept of perception, and specifically how interactions with the world are negotiated and manifested as a process of embodiment.

1.6 An 'Aesthetic' Experience - A Heightened Form of Awareness?

Having explored the basic components of awareness, wonder and 'immediately sensuous' experiences, I now want to consider the heightened sensuous events usually termed 'aesthetic experiences'. Though knowledge of the characteristics of 'aesthetic experiences' is useful in case some of the children claim to have experienced one, I want to stress that a specific investigation of 'aesthetic experiences' was not part of my research agenda.²³.

This notwithstanding, I found it helpful initially to consider John Dewey's (1979), definition of the nature of experience. He suggests, that human experience happens throughout life as we interact with the world; and this interaction elicits emotions and ideas as we steer a course of intentionality. On our journey however, there are two types of experience: one which is

undeveloped, when our thoughts, desires and actions don't coalesce; and the other when they come to a fulfilment thereby distinguishing the event as *an* experience (Dewey,1979:35) .

Dewey (1979), also reveals that experiences have unity and a singularity of quality which marks them out as particular types of experience (Dewey,1979:37). Because the children in my study will interact with ancient objects, the space, their teachers and their peers, their experiences will be multi-dimensional. As a result, the quality and character of these individual experiences, whether satisfying, enjoyable, unpleasant or meaningful, will determine the nature of their museum experience as a whole. Thus, Dewey's text, is helpful in the way it describes the flow of events which go to make up lived experience, and more particularly, how our thoughts and feelings affect the way we respond in life.

To consider the question of aesthetic experience then, I turned to Diané Collison (1992), Clive Bell (1915/61), Jerome Stolnitz (1998), and Mihaly Csikszentmihayli and Rick Robinson (1990). In Collison's historical and philosophical survey of this experience she demonstrates that every explanation is conditioned and affected by cultural and temporal factors. Consequently, although she gives a thorough review of aesthetic theories down the centuries, ranging from Aristotle via Kant to Beardsley, she found no consensus: stating, 'Descriptions of the aesthetic experience are so various and make such diverse claims that it is difficult to find any clear defining characteristic of it or any single feature that is shared by all its descriptions' (Collison,1992:111). Furthermore, while a great deal of ink had been spilt on the subject of perception and beauty before the eighteenth century, it was only with the work of Baumgarten(1735), that the term aesthetics came into common parlance, was eventually conflated with art and, as a unified concept, became a fixed branch of philosophy (Collison,1992: 112)²⁴.

What Collison (1992), reveals about all these theories is the way in which every scholar struggled to come to terms with the problems of matching language with this type of experience. She explains, 'It has been described as an

experience that imparts knowledge, as one that does not impart knowledge, as will-less, disinterested, as active, as passive, as cathartic, as contemplative' (1992:111). So, according to Collison, we can assume that when an aesthetic experience occurs some or all of these characteristics will be present. It may be a unique, rare or extraordinary happening distinguishable by bodily euphoria, lightness or undistractedness (Findlay, in Collison,1992:115). It may feel as if, 'it seizes one's whole mind or imagination and conveys whatever it does convey so vividly that the result is delight and knowledge'(Collison,1992:115). Or it may be a way of comprehending things separately from the will (Schopenhauer, in Collison,1992:115); distinguishing beauty from desire or pleasure (Aristotle, in Collison,1992:119); based entirely on feeling - as, 'a quite separate faculty of discriminating and estimating' (Kant in Collison,1992:135); or even experiencing felt freedom - 'that lift of the spirit, sudden dropping away of thoughts and feelings that were problematic ... a sense of ... having one's real way, even though not having actually chosen or won it' (Beardsley in Collison,1992:166). Every philosopher not only attempts to describe the phenomenon, but is also at pains to explain and justify their theory in reference to the art of their time.

I now want to focus on the Edwardian critic, Clive Bell's (1915/61), theory of *Significant Form*, as a way of searching for an understanding of the aesthetic experience. For Bell, 'the starting point of all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion ... this emotion is called aesthetic emotion [and] the objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art' (Bell,1915/61:21-22). When attempting to isolate the quality which provokes this emotion, he suggests that it is the 'significant form' of works of art, and by this he means, 'lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms' (Bell,1915/61:23). He goes further in fact and argues:

Significant form conveys an emotion felt by its creator', and to feel it, 'we need bring nothing with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions ... for a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life(Bell,1915/61:36).

Thus in Bell's view, to appreciate art aesthetically we need to divest ourselves of life (even to the extent of dismissing the content of representational images)

and become absorbed merely by the formal aspects of the work.

Bell's (1915/61), theory is not only highly prescriptive but very subjective, and as Collison (1992), says, has a vicious circularity because significant form and æsthetic emotion are defined as mutually exclusive. Furthermore, if one takes issue with his theory one could be accused of not being sensitive enough to respond æsthetically (Collison,1992:149-150).

Unlike Bell's (1915/61), theory which is exclusively focused on art. Stolnitz's(1998), article on the *Æsthetic Attitude*, describes and demystifies what it is like to have an æsthetic engagement with an object of attention; consequently, from this point of view what he has to say has more relevance for children's experiences of objects.

Initially, Stolnitz(1998), says that our attitudes determine the way in which we make sense of the world, and *paying attention* is always selective and never indiscriminate. Second, what we select to pay attention to is determined by our goals or intentions which may be positively or negatively oriented. And third, while most of our attention and attitudes are of a practical nature satisfying clearly defined goals, an æsthetic attitude is not motivated by an aim, rather it is aimless (1998:78-79).

Although he is reluctant to define an 'æsthetic attitude', Stolnitz (1998), uses the following description as a point of departure for discussing its salient characteristics. He says 'an æsthetic attitude' is, 'disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatsoever, for its own sake alone' (1998:80). According to Stolnitz, [and Kant(1973), Bell (1915/61), and Fry(1926)], one of the most significant aspects of an æsthetic attitude is disinterestedness²⁵ - which means when we focus on an object we do so purely for itself - 'its whole nature and character are dwelt upon' (Stolnitz,1998:80). Furthermore, when we engage with the object sympathetically we do so by opening ourselves up to it - allowing it to take the lead and being prepared to respond. In effect this means giving ourselves time to attend to the object, not in a passive way but rather in an active intense fashion so that we can behold it and be held (Stolnitz,1998:81-82). This also means being attentive to all the

object's details - in other words becoming more acutely sensitive. In the process of contemplating the object it should come alive and enhance the quality of our experience. However, this contemplation is not quiet meditation, rather it is a more alert and vigorous engagement. Summing up Stolnitz says, 'the æsthetic attitude can be adopted toward "any object of awareness whatever" ... it means that perception is directed to the object in its own right and that the spectator is not concerned to analyze it or to ask questions about it' (1998:83).

If Stolnitz (1998), was happy to embrace the æsthetic attitude wherever and whenever it occurred, the cognitive psychologists, Csikszentmihayli and Robinson(1990), deliberately chose to investigate æsthetic experiences which occurred in art museums. Using a positivistic approach they attempted to establish whether æsthetic experiences were innate or learned, (undermining notions of disinterestedness) and if learned how they could be taught, and the conditions which could promote them. Making the assumption that museum professionals' skilled viewing practices would be more insightful and display a narrower range of behaviour, they hypothesized that successful æsthetic or 'flow'²⁶ experiences are pleasant and result from a certain type of seeing. Then, after undertaking a historical review of æsthetic theories to discover what was already known about the phenomenon, they conducted questionnaires and interviews, which were interpreted using a combined qualitative/quantitative method.

Though Csikszentmihayli and Robinson's (1990), study reveals that an æsthetic experience can elicit fugitive qualities in addition to similar perceptual, cognitive, emotional and communicative responses (1990:28), they prescribe a conceptual model to effect this type of experience. Accordingly, they suggest that sensitivity, concentration, curiosity and a balance between visual skills and challenges are necessary to bring it about. However, it could be argued that while these findings are interesting, using a highly specialised sample, and confining their experiences to visual stimulation, seriously limits the scope and application of their study.

Relevant to my own phenomenological research though, is Csikszentmihayli

and Robinson's (1990), interview data, which record how people *felt* during what was defined as an 'aesthetic experience'. For instance, one person said, 'the museum absolutely sang to me'(1990:63); another commented, 'there's a kind of conversation throughout the ages'(1990:64); another said, 'the aesthetic response is silent - it has nothing to do with words at all' (1990:68); and yet another said, 'art is primarily visual, but it heightens your sense of the other, the outside, the thing experienced, and in the process, heightens your awareness of yourself, and even though you're being fully absorbed and transported by an object perceived by the senses, you're losing yourself at the same time you become yourself '(1990:68).

On the basis of a statistical analysis of these statements, Csikszentmihayli and Robinson (1990), acknowledge that they may have been 'learned' responses conditioned by the cultural and ideological traditions of this museum (i.e. based on modernist assumptions about the function of the work of art)²⁷. Furthermore, they reveal that although common factors emerged, every experience had qualities which made it unique (1990:73). If the uniqueness of this experience is conceded, surely a positivistic interpretation compromises both these findings and the objectives of the research?

The articles in this section raise a number of pertinent issues, namely: that an 'aesthetic' experience/attitude and the concept of 'art' are not only difficult to define, but are culturally/philosophically/historically constructed concepts particular to those who define them²⁸. It may be argued therefore, that an 'aesthetic' experience - the result of the contemplation of 'art', is highly questionable. Moreover, if aesthetic experiences can be experienced with 'any object of awareness', the scope for experiencing them is vastly increased ²⁹.

While some of Csikszentmihayli and Robinson's (1990), interviewees claimed that their 'aesthetic' experience absorbed them so completely they felt lost and at one with the world, I am left wondering whether this challenges Merleau-Ponty's notion of having knowledge of the 'real' (1962:242). However, if it is accepted that there is knowledge of this experience then one has to concede that this implies not pre-consciousness but consciousness. Thus, if Merleau-Ponty's

theory is accurate, there can be no knowledge of the 'real', only an imperfect knowledge of reality. Access to this pre-reflective state therefore, can only be attempted symbolically through representations of the 'real', of which language is one particular expression³⁰.

2. AWARENESS - TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VISUAL THROUGH TOUCH:

Anyone who has experience of very young children will know how curious they can be when faced with new visual stimuli³¹. In most cases this state of visual awareness will prompt action towards further investigation of the stimulus through the use of the other senses. Touching, tasting, smelling and listening may all take place during which more complex information gathering occurs. Notwithstanding all these sensory interactions, the power and pull of wanting to touch seems most compelling.

My particular research focuses on children, in particular on touching ancient objects, and an understanding of this tactile experience. However, in the absence of specific information on touching ancient artefacts, I have consulted a selection of phenomenological, physiological³² and philosophical texts on touch, in addition to reviewing a number of articles, books and academic dissertations which consider children's experiences of handling objects in museums.

2.1 Touch and the Skin:

To consider the sensation of touch from a phenomenological perspective I focus again on the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962), who explores how sensation and sense experience are integral factors of perception. I have already explained how initially human beings interact with the world in a bodily way, which precedes awareness and knowledge and is described as the 'real'. Access to reality (which is a reflection of the 'real') occurs with sensation which, as both medium and message, thereby brings about consciousness. To sense therefore is to be conscious, and to be conscious is to be conscious of the qualities of objects. Objects do not exist extra to qualities, they are the qualities. Furthermore, this process is not just consciousness of the qualities, but consciousness of the significance of these qualities, which is meaning. However, because these

qualities are never fully developed or defined they are experienced as only part of a contextual whole. Sensation then is a form of co-existence, as Merleau-Ponty says, 'I experience the sensation as a modality of a general existence, one already destined for a physical world and one which runs through me without my being the cause of it' (1962:216).

By virtue of the fact that all sensations take place in space and time they impinge and interconnect with one another creating integrated experiences. But, all sensations occupy a certain field and have a certain way of being, or making surface contact with being - a particular manner of being in space and, in a sense, of making space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:221). 'This proves that each organ of sense explores the object in its own way, that it is the agent of a certain type of synthesis' (1962:223). Touching, like all the other senses, finds its particularity when it is experienced as one predominant facet within a many-faceted, sentient field. To be aware of this particular sensation is to reflect upon and question what it is to have this experience therefore. However, as Merleau-Ponty explains, 'sensations, "sensible qualities" are then far from being reducible to a certain indescribable state or *quale*; they present themselves with a motor physiognomy, and are enveloped in a living significance' (1962:209-210). Though Merleau-Ponty's (1962), theoretical exegesis deals with sense experience as a whole rather than focusing on specific sensations, it is expounded in a convincing manner. Though my study will not theorize about children's sense experiences of ancient objects, it will be sensitive to the ways in which they are perceived as conceptual and pre-conceptual manifestations of 'real' bodily existence.

To consider touch and touching from a physiological point of view I turned to a text by Ashley Montagu (1971), and a number of co-authored texts by Susan Lederman, Roberta Klatzky and Victoria Metzger (1985, 1997, 1998)³³. Montagu's book focuses on the phenomenon of touch and sets out to demonstrate how crucial the skin is to healthy human behaviour, development, and well-being. Armed with scientific data, he tells us that the skin is the oldest and largest organ of the body; it is the most sensitive; the earliest to develop; the first medium of communication, and the most fundamental to survival. Without skin

we would lack protection; be unable to regulate our temperature and metabolism; be unable to touch and explore the world; lack a reservoir for food and water; and be unable to facilitate the passage of gases or absorb vitamin D (Montagu,1971:1-3,7-8).

Montagu (1971), also makes the point that while some of the functions of the skin are unknown or taken for granted³⁴, the significance and sensitivity of its tactile role are well recognised. One needs only to be aware of the many references to touch through the expressions of common parlance to realise how important it is (1971:5-6)³⁵. This book is researched from a physiological perspective and draws attention to the way that studying the embodied language of touch, can be insightful indicators of lived experience; thus, when the pre-reflective meanings of lived experience are probed, attention to language and specifically hermeneutics is crucial³⁶.

Although Lederman and Klatzky have produced a plethora of texts on touch both singly and corporately, I want to refer particularly to Lederman's chapter on *Skin and Touch* (1997). Here she remarks that as most research on touch has been restricted to the hand, and especially the hairless side of the hand, understanding how the skin functions as an organ of the entire body should not be overlooked. However, while it is not necessary to summarize all the physiological details of her experimental research, it is helpful to be aware of the role of the mechanoreceptors. She explains:

[The mechanoreceptors] differ in their structure and distribution within the skin and in their response to static and dynamic mechanical events. They are selectively sensitive to different stimulus properties and project such information to the central nervous system where it is transformed by at least two neural networks before reaching the cerebral cortex (Lederman,1997: 49).

She then discusses passive and active touch with regard to the amount of control exerted by the subject and the type of sensory information available, and defines the terms 'tactile', 'kinæsthetic' and 'haptic' as they relate to touch. Tactile relates to cutaneous inputs or inputs from the skin; kinæsthetic relates to sensory inputs from the muscles, tendons and joints; and haptic relates to both cutaneous and kinæsthetic inputs (Lederman,1997:50-51). Experiments which explore intensive, spatial and temporal sensitivity, quantitative assessments of

perceived events, and recognition of spatial and texture perception are then recorded, followed by information on object motion across the skin, haptics and applications of the research. This notwithstanding, because haptics and the hand as a perceptual system relate directly to my research, I will refer to them in the next section.

2.2 Touching Objects - Against the Ocular-centric:

In Martin's (1981), text he explains that because painting has tended to dominate a Western concept of art since the Enlightenment, thereby marginalizing sculpture and architecture, so perception has tended to be dominated by the eminence of the eye (1981:26)³⁷. To counter this situation he uses a phenomenological approach to explore how crucial the senses, and particularly the sense of touch is to our perceptions of three-dimensional objects and space. Quoting Focillon he says:

The hand knows that an object has physical bulk, that it is smooth or rough, that it is not soldered to heaven or earth from which it appears to be inseparable. The hand's action defines the cavity of space and the fullness of the objects which occupy it. Surface, volume, density and weight are not optical phenomena. Man first learned about them between his finger and in the hollow of his palm. He does not measure space with his eyes but with his hands and feet. The sense of touch fills nature with mysterious forces. Without it, nature is like the pleasant landscapes of the magic lantern, slight, flat, and chimerical (Focillon, in Martin,1981:79).

Martin(1981), uses this quotation to point out that by touching objects we become *in touch* with reality and, in the process of perceiving something other than ourselves, our own bodily identity is defined. Placing our body in a meaningful relationship to objects therefore not only enlivens the space which they both share, thereby providing a sense of being in the world, but it allows for a sense of temporal identity too. 'Sculpture satisfies a fundamental craving of human sensibility ... Sculpture returns us to the vital plenitude of being-in-the-world, to being in the midst of things as part of them' (Martin,1981:79). Consequently, without our sophisticated sensual/perceptual receptors our concept of space and form would cease to be known. It is especially through our sense of touch then that this knowing draws its strength.

Martin (1981), also explains that while we can experience touch in a bodily way by bumping, banging, pushing, pulling or soothing, it is the sensitivity of touch which comes from the hand by helping us to detect the nature or quality

of objects³⁸(1981:79). The weight, texture, size, bulk, construction and design can all be discerned just through touch; even the function of an object can be detected through tactile signs of wear and tear.

Detecting the quality of objects through perception not only involves awareness but 'aesthetic'³⁹ awareness. Martin explains:

In perception that is primary in orientation, the 'concrete suchness' of things penetrates, permeates, and thus controls our awareness. Furthermore, if this awareness is sustained, the experience becomes aesthetic. Then we become aware of being one with these things. Conversely in secondary perception we abstract from the 'concrete suchness' of things and thus gain some control over them (Martin,1981:51-52).

It is clear when reading Martin's text that he values Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1964a), theory of perception and sense experience, and recognizes how crucial touch is to a feeling of embodiment. He asserts:

My body simultaneously sees and is seen. It touches itself touching. It feels itself moving through the inherence of sensing in the sensed. Because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself (Merleau-Ponty,1964a:162-163).

In fact, when we experience form as an object or our own body, we respond or adopt a certain type of behaviour which can be experienced in at least three different ways, as previously discussed (Lederman,1997:50-51). Describing how Martin experienced a modern sculpture he says:

I felt my body as very tightly unified with this impacting between the material body of the sculpture, and continual body adjustments were necessary. My tactile feelings and, in turn, my haptic⁴⁰ and kinæsthetic feelings were much more strongly stimulated ... there was considerable co-perception of my body. In this respect the sculpture made me a participant (Martin,1981:38).

Moving through space in relation to objects is what brought the space alive. This text is one of the most relevant to my research question by providing in-depth information about what it feels like to experience objects.

I now want to return to Lederman, Klatzky and Metzger's (1985,1998) research on, 'Identifying objects by touch', and 'The hand as a perceptual system'. It has already been established that the way in which we make sense of the felt environment comes not only from tactile responses to stimuli through the cutaneous mechanoreceptors embedded in the skin, but also from kinæsthetic responses to stimuli through receptors embedded in the muscles, tendons and joints. Furthermore, when cutaneous and kinæsthetic responses combine,

haptic responses result.

However, though Lederman and Klatzky (1998), describe the cutaneous system, and the neural mechanisms and codes with reference to spatial, temporal sensitivity, intensity, roughness/smoothness, hardness/softness, temperature, weight, 2D geometric pattern, 3D curvature and 2D orientation, I want to focus particularly on the ways in which the haptic system functions in terms of perception and recognition. For example, contrary to popular opinion, haptics can be highly reliable for recognizing objects (Lederman, Klatzky and Metzger, 1985:299). After conducting an experiment to compare visual and haptic identification of a hundred objects, with a sample of five students and twenty students respectively, there was 96% accuracy with haptic recognition, and 68% of these occurred within three seconds (Lederman, Klatzky and Metzger, 1985:300).

Notwithstanding, Lederman, Klatzky and Metzger (1985) reveal that haptics can be very unreliable for determining the identity of familiar objects when represented by raised two-dimensional reliefs. The reason for the difficulty is because a simulated object does not use the hands' potential to determine its physical qualities; in other words, when deprived of some of its vital clues the haptic system performs badly, unlike the visual system which finds geometric identification easy. Lederman (1997,1998), summarizes these points as follows:

Common objects are easier to recognize because they are three dimensional and have other characteristics, such as surface texture, hardness, thermal properties, weight and so forth. All these different sources of information redundantly specify the object's identity. It appears that the anatomical, sensory, and motor characteristics of the human hand lend themselves admirably well to the extraction of these different types of information. It has been suggested that in processing multidimensional objects, the haptic system functions independently of other perceptual systems (such as vision), with its own specific ways of selecting and processing information about objects, and of representing them in memory ... Sensory integration of vision and haptics [likely] occurs during the latter stages of processing (Lederman, 1997:57).

The haptic system is generally much better (faster and more accurate) than vision at discriminating fine differences in the material properties of objects (e.g. roughness, hardness), whereas vision is far better at differentiating precise details in spatial geometry. In more common perceptual situations where touch and vision often receive and use redundant information, we typically find that touch and vision work in an effective complementary fashion - touch extracts information about material attributes, whereas vision extracts geometric properties (Lederman, in Verry,1998:66).

Additional to this information, Lederman (1997), shows by means of a series of diagrams, how manual exploration of objects using specific hand movements can supply information which can subsequently be processed cognitively. For example; a lateral motion determines texture; static contact determines temperature; pressure detects hardness; unsupported holding determines weight; following the contour detects global or exact shape; enclosure determines global shape or volume; function testing determines a special purpose; and a part motion test determines how different parts of an object function (1997:58).

All these research texts which contribute to a physiological understanding of touch and the haptic system, are not only enlightening in terms of children's experiences of handling objects, but also demonstrate how valuable touch can be for both perception and learning (Lederman, in Verry,1998:66).

2.3 Touching Objects in Museums:

Something fundamental comes alive in a child when he can see, touch and handle
(Harrison,1970:12).

A report edited by Sue Mitchell (1996), which focuses specifically on museum objects, describes a three year partnership project between a number of different Scottish museums and schools. After acknowledging that the educational potential of museums was largely untapped, it demonstrates how teachers gradually became aware of the unique ways in which museums can speak of origins, uses, materials, users and cultural values within the human and the natural world. And furthermore, how they soon became aware of the tremendous scope for cross-curricular activity which in itself was considered to be educationally empowering (Kemp in Mitchell,1996:ix).

From the findings of the case studies in formal and informal settings, objects were shown to speak more directly than words, have an immediacy of impact and stimulate curiosity through active learning strategies. For example, in the case of the Marischal Museum, handling was considered a vitally important way of developing skills of investigation and imaginative speculation, as well as communicating the significance of objects as carriers of meaning. However, though it would have been interesting to learn how children made these

meanings from their experiences of touching objects, their opinions were not sought(Mitchell,1996: 7-8, 61-62).

Further reference to the Marischal Museum's 'hands on' policy is recorded in an article by Neil Curtis and Janet Goolnik (1995). In the museum's handling workshops children were allowed to touch authentic (not replica) objects from the collection and taught how to treat and care for them. Even though no evidence is available, Curtis and Goolnik report that children appeared to be more motivated, felt more connected to historical evidence, and seemed to have a greater understanding of the peoples who crafted the artefacts, as a direct result of these sessions(1995:11). Teachers played a vital role here, and indeed, special lessons were arranged to help them teach their pupils how to interpret the objects from the past by using dialogue and imagination (1995:12). From a study based on observations and teacher evaluations, a report entitled, *Hands on! Children Learning from Objects at the Marischal Museum* (Goolnik, 1995), was published which, apart from commending the use of objects, listed a number of suggestions of how to make handling sessions effective (Mitchell,1996:61-63).

Both these texts (1996,1995), suggest how objects can help children understand more about the world, and in the process, learn more about themselves. However, while my research does not set out to measure the effectiveness of objects as carriers of factual information, it does seek to understand more about the relationship between children and objects through interviewing and observation.

In their text, *A Teachers Guide to Learning From Objects*, Gail Durbin, Susan Morris, and Sue Wilkinson (1990), demonstrate how children can use objects as historical sources. However, while this book does not confine its approach to touching, it does stress the advantages of handling and, from a practical point of view, gives valuable advice about how to encourage children to use all their senses to make observations. Once these have been exhausted children are then instructed to formulate hypotheses on the basis of the evidence, and then to test them (1990:5).

By focusing on the physical characteristics, the construction, function, design and the value of objects, Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson (1990), recommend that children should be urged to look, touch, describe, classify and record their findings (1990:5). Objects, they tell us, provide excellent ways of gaining insights into different cultures and peoples, and for extracting information which textual sources may not reveal. They maintain, 'If you can understand objects you can also explore the lives of people who provide no permanent written information about themselves' (1990:4).

Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson's (1990) text gives valuable advice about using objects and asking questions which promote an understanding of history and culture. However, it does not reveal how one moves from the factual information one has collected towards an understanding of the people from the past. While factual evidence is important, a section on interpreting the evidence would have added a deeper level of meaning.

Though René Marcoucé (1974), considers different environments where children can touch, discuss and interpret objects, the overarching emphasis of her text focuses on strategies which encourage children to have in-depth object encounters (1974:10). Moreover, she acknowledges that while museums and galleries have the potential to stir children's creative abilities and foster wonder and delight, guidance is needed to make their experiences meaningful. When children are permitted to look and touch unfamiliar objects they automatically find the motivation to scrutinise them, relate their responses to their own experience through recollection, and incorporate this experience into their own pattern of understanding (Clark, in Marcoucé, 1974:44).

A quotation by Gibson, cited by Marcoucé, argues that, 'perception helps talking and talking fixes the grains of perception' (1974:21). For example, when an 11 year old boy describes his experience of touching a shell, he says:

When I hold it and shut my eyes, it feels rough, jagged and then smooth ... There are lots of ridges at one end but the other is open and curved and deeper at one side. I feel inside, my fingers echo and make a noise like the sea ... I like to hold it so that I see the sandy ridges inside - it's not real sand but looks like it - and above, the ridges are like worms crawling as if trying to get inside (Marcoucé, 1974:30).

Here we can see how the boy's experience was made more vivid by the way in

which his visual and haptic senses stimulated his imagination.

Sketching from a handled or viewed object can also, 'hold a child longer in the [object's] presence, to make him look more attentively and allow time to relate what he is told or knows to what he sees, so that image and concept together promote new ideas and lead to greater understanding'(Marcou  ,1974:32). Both sight and touch become active thought. Although some of the first-hand accounts are relevant to my research and help enlarge an understanding of visual awareness, they also reveal ways in which visual learning can be improved.

In this text many of Marcou  's (1974), arguments appear convincing, in particular, I agree that though touching and long periods of looking can be beneficial, without guidance and questioning through conversation children will not intuitively find meanings or move to a greater understanding of the physical properties of objects.

Questions which probe the value of touch in museums are addressed in Morna Hinton's (1993), article, *Handling Collections: A Whole-Museum Issue*. Making the case for handling as a vital part of the educational practice of museums, she discusses the role objects have played in the psychological theories of both Jean Piaget (1976), and Jerome Bruner (1966). But, while she acknowledges Piaget's pioneering work in delineating the stages of children's intellectual developmental⁴¹, she, like Bruner, does not agree that the use of objects should be confined to the lower stages of cognitive development.

In the process of explaining Bruner's, *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, (1966), Hinton (1993), tells us that there are three different modes of experience or skills namely, the *enactive*, the *iconic* and the *symbolic* (Hinton,1993:16). The enactive relates to touch and physical manipulation, the iconic, to sight and visual experience, and the symbolic, to the abstract sign systems of language. All three systems of skills correspond to three major tool systems; first - tools for the hand; second - tools for the distance receptors; and third - tools for the process of reflection. With reference to Margaret Donaldson (1984), she then argues that, because Western cultures value abstract reasoning so highly, the

symbolic system predominates thereby marginalizing the iconic and enactive systems which she believes are vital for children's intellectual and emotional development. To endorse the value of concrete experience, Hinton cites Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1991a), who says, 'A particularly important aspect of objects is a materiality to which we react, particularly through touching, and which demands a response from both the body and the mind' (Hooper-Greenhill, in Hinton,1993:17).

As a corollary, Hinton(1993) raises the point that not all objects are valuable, especially if they are haphazardly collected or dilapidated (1993:19). Instead I would argue that it is possible to respond to every object regardless of its condition or context. Some ancient Egyptian objects for example, are incomplete and in a fragmentary state; these factors alone can help children piece together evidence and make informed suggestions on the basis of what they feel and see.

Hinton's article is not only informative but, by drawing strength from educational theory and evidence from specific museum experiences, shows how vital it is to be 'in touch' with the concrete as a way of learning. All objects are redolent of meaning and by touching them children connect to the physical world of things. My research aims to study children's experiences of objects structured by an educational programme which offers a range of activities which allow these modes of learning to take place.

An MA report⁴² by Avigail Ochert(1999), echoes Hinton's (1993), research by encouraging children to use their tactile and observational skills in museums instead of relying on reading information. In a similar way to Hinton she claims that when children handle genuine artefacts a sense of 'aura'⁴³ may be transmitted which, as a type of empathy, cannot be replicated by any other means. Moreover, it is through this response to handling that meanings can be effectively extrapolated(1999:27).

Using the Geffrye Museum, London, and the Imperial War Museum, London, as case studies, Ochert(1999), examines the discovery sheets which are used with each museum's handling collection of photographs, documents and personal belongings. She reports that, though tangible evidence can be interesting, it

does not become significant unless it can initiate questions and encourage deductive reasoning. To emphasise this point she quotes Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson (1990):

To try to unravel the significance of an object you need to analyse what it says about the people who made, used and preserved it. What does it reveal about their taste, wealth, status, aspirations, social customs and behaviour, their skills and resources and their economy, politics and religion (Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson,1990:10)?

Citing Anderson's (1999), *National Report on Museum Education*, she makes the point that merely searching for 'right' answers does not help children to use evidence with imagination, formulate hypotheses and test out their own theories (Anderson, in Ochert,1999:12).

Another study is an unpublished theoretical Ph.D. thesis by Kriekouki-Nakou (1996), in which museum handling collections were used to investigate pupils' historical thinking. Taking four groups of thirty-five pupils aged from 12 to 15 years as her sample, she gave them tasks graded in terms of difficulty. The children's answers were then used as data to establish the nature and character of their historical thinking. Although this study was very thoroughly conducted using a positivistic methodology, her conclusions rely heavily on a quantitative assessment of data which was collected and interpreted in a qualitative spirit. For example, she defines a notion of historical thinking, evaluates looking in terms of difficulty, measures previous historical knowledge, and assesses the educational atmosphere of the museums which are all based on subjective criteria. In consequence, I have serious doubts about the extent to which she can make generalizations from her findings. It is interesting however, to learn that handling objects is considered to be the route to understanding. Had she interpreted her data differently it might have been possible to move to a greater understanding of how a child thinks historically.

3. AWARENESS - TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VISUAL THROUGH SPEECH:

A child should always say what's true and speak when he is spoken to ...
(Stevenson in Cohen,1960:375).

In this quotation by Robert Louis Stevenson, taken from a poem entitled, 'The Whole Duty of Children', the Victorian notion of children being seen and not

heard is implicit. In contrast, the children of today are positively encouraged to express themselves freely, to speak out and speak up. Moreover in many of the texts which discuss child development and early learning, conversations play a major part in children's experiences with their family, peers and teachers. For example, Julie Fisher notes:

It is language which affords children the means of making sense of their experiences and internalising their actions. In order to capitalize on the power of language to influence both thought and action, classroom experiences must encourage talk as a key process through which children learn. Talking something through, either alone or with others, is an important way of grasping new ideas, understanding concepts or clarifying feelings and perceptions (Fisher,1996:13)⁴⁴.

However, if speaking and conversing are considered to be vital for social intercourse and education, what part does speech, and more fundamentally language, play in interpreting and articulating lived experience? Furthermore, what role can words play in helping us understand our relationships with objects as an expression of reality?

Although my research does not focus exclusively on the language which children use as they interact with ancient objects from a cognitive or semiotic perspective, it acknowledges through the use of a hermeneutic phenomenological method, the contribution which language makes towards an understanding of their experiences. However, rather than focusing on methodological issues of language in this section, I want to turn to a number of theoretical texts which draw upon ways in which words, and specifically spoken words, help children make sense of their experiences with objects.

Initially then, in what ways do children use language as they experience objects in a museum? From my own experience of children in museums I have noticed that they engage in conversation by responding to wonder or astonishment; asking and responding to questions; and relating their experience to others. They may also talk to themselves to enlist verbal assistance in the execution of a task, or even sing or hum to promote concentration⁴⁵. Therefore language, as audible thought, is not only used as a means of communicating with others, but as a way of communicating with themselves.

3.1 Linguistic Landscapes:

While I accept that 'art' and objects can convey themselves to us in an 'immediately sensuous' fashion which requires no speech, our overwhelming urge to communicate what we have encountered prompts us to voice our responses. Therefore, while accepting the shortcomings of language to describe these experiences with 'accuracy'⁴⁶, I have consulted texts which describe how speech has helped children to become more in touch with the depth of their experiences.

In 'Points of Contact', Frances Sword (1994), an educator at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, describes her surprise at children's responses to museum objects observing, 'children have shown extraordinary insights, intense feelings. I have been party to these because of the words children have used - unexpected words - phrases which float and create new landscapes of awareness as they are spoken' (1994:7). Objects, Sword claims, are very potent carriers of ideas; they are multifaceted and often provide catalysts for questioning, imagination and discussion (1994:7). However, it is the teacher's creative and imaginative use of language which can often bring an object's style and form to the attention of the child. Furthermore, it is through this linguistic medium that teachers learn to ask the questions which help children to describe, explain, convey, disclose and express themselves: 'Discussion is our main teaching tool. With words we have to paint, mine, weave, pot and carve; our words have to create experiences that enable children to make sense of what they see' (1994:7). By focusing on objects children can bring their stories to life. Just as an object's style and function are related, so the words of children's stories relate to one another in the telling. Research suggests that we should not underestimate the impact which our choice of words can have on the imaginative potential of children as they interact with objects.

Listening, argues Sword (1994), is vital too. Only patient, sensitive listening will give every child a chance to express himself/herself. 'We must orchestrate the dynamics of group discussion ... above all we must listen to the children for our cues to catch the moments which enable observations to develop into creative thinking' (1994:8). For, she asserts, when we listen to children and value their

stories we inspire them with confidence. A child's new found confidence can help him/her to engage more wholeheartedly with the curious, the mysterious and the enigmatic object; and this involvement can lead to more questions and hopefully to more understanding (1994:8).

This article is relevant because it describes ways in which children respond to objects within a museum environment. However, although Sword's (1994), approach is sensitive and demonstrably effective with children, it would have had even more impact if she had included a selection of children's statements to give more support to her argument.

Another project which stresses the value of conversation is cited by Bjarne Sode Funch (1993), a research psychologist with an interest in art education. Although her article looks at different ways of finding meaning from art, one particular strategy used by Sherry Goodman, head of museum education, at Berkeley University's Art Museum, is of relevance here. Goodman instructed groups of ten to fifteen children to choose an exhibit, find a good viewing distance, relax and then look. After a short while she asked them for their reactions, continually drawing them back to their own personal experiences elicited through association with the artwork. Funch draws on two conversational extracts, during which Goodman shows how interacting with works of art happens through a complex stream of consciousness characterized by both perceptual awareness and perceptual sensitivity. Thus, while the former emphasizes and differentiates the visual aspect of the experience, the latter evokes the emotions, promotes associations, stirs the imagination and other psychological activities, in order that the visual can be characterized (1993:95-96).

Acknowledging that a spontaneous emotional reaction to an artwork can be used to reinforce the experience, Funch's (1993), says:

An experience of an artwork is more complex than the artwork itself. It is generally accepted that visual perception is not just a representation of the visual field but a selective process influenced by knowledge, arousal, emotions, and so forth. Emphasizing perceptual sensitivity represents another approach to perception where the sensuous dimension rather than the cognitive is the focus (Funch,1993:97).

Through the process of talking the children explored their feelings as aspects of their particular experience, rather than focusing on the formal qualities of the artwork in question. Acknowledging that this approach might be contentious in cases when artworks incite prejudicial responses, it demonstrates that all responses are characteristic of our attitudes, beliefs and values. Thus, when children are encouraged to express their own feelings in response to an artwork, there is every chance they will discover what their own attitudes, beliefs and values are. However, as Funch (1993), argues, if they are asked to explain merely what an artwork means, their answers will not be so rich or so plentiful (1993:97)⁴⁷.

The ideas in Funch's (1993), text demonstrate not only how important it is to allow children to have a voice when they interact with art objects, but how valuable this experience can be in terms of finding a sense of personal identity. Because part of this experience involves talking about what it felt like to interact with the objects on a sensuous level, I have found Funch's research paper helpful. But, although I do not necessarily agree that asking children to express an opinion about the meaning of artefacts is always daunting or unproductive, I am aware that there is increasing evidence in the museum world that engaging with artefacts on an emotional level can be personally enlightening. Allowing children time to discuss what they noticed or felt, gives them space to reflect on their experiences, and an opportunity to explore the deeper recesses of their being. So, although there is a difference between Funch's (1993) research objectives and my own, by talking to the children during their museum visit and interviewing them in their schools, I should be able to tap into their human experience and build up a picture of what it was like to encounter the objects.

Elizabeth Soep and Teresa Cotner (1999), undertook a research programme which investigated the type of language which people used to convey meaning when they described works of art. In the process their findings revealed four common interpretive strategies namely: contrast, negation, speculation and narration.

During the research a number of interviewees were given half an hour to describe a lithograph, during which audio and video-taped recordings were made and later transcribed. Discourse analysis was then undertaken, and a positivistic scoring system was used to interpret the results⁴⁸(Soep and Cotner,1999:358). For example, where the students mentioned contrast ('It's smooth but textured') this indicated their awareness of multiple layers of meaning. When they called upon negative aspects ('It's not a calm painting') this indicated something ineffable. Speculation ('The artist might have ...') indicated use of the imagination; and narration ('Some wind is taking them ...') indicated a readiness to be carried off imaginatively to a space beyond the visual space of the lithograph. In conclusion, Soep and Cotner argue for teachers not only to listen to what their students say to discern and evaluate the content, but to be aware of how their students use language to become more in touch with the students themselves through their aesthetic encounters.

Whilst I applaud Soep and Cotner's (1999), pedagogical motives, and find the the contingent nature of the aesthetic interpretations interesting, I am unconvinced about the value of using a scoring system to extrapolate generalizations about the experience. Though my research adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological method to analyse children's interpretations of ancient Egyptian objects, the commonalities it discovers will be used to *understand* rather than generalize about this experience. I acknowledge that Soep and Cotner's (1999), method of investigating language is rigorous, but their positivistic approach has the effect of disembodiment the data thereby preventing the reader from engaging with the experience as a holistically human encounter.

Summary:

Throughout this chapter I have used a number of theoretical and phenomenological texts which reveal how children become aware of objects; and how that awareness happens through sensation (specifically through sight and touch), imagination and perception, and in addition how words and speech help that process to become manifest. However, although it would have been ideal to have drawn on information which discussed children's experiences of

ancient objects, and specifically ancient Egyptian objects, there is no specific research⁴⁹. In the light of this deficiency, even though many texts used children as their subjects, occasionally I have had to resort to books and articles which focused on adults. This notwithstanding, despite the fact that a number of theoretical texts have helped me to learn a great deal about different aspects of this experience, I am more than ever aware that there are obvious gaps in the research.

Notes:

1. To take a phenomenological stance to research is fundamentally, 'to return at the things themselves ... to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:ix). In the context of this study, this means investigating, describing and interpreting the experiential meanings of children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects. However, while this process will not explain why the children responded in certain ways, ultimately it will attempt to show how these meanings have relevance for primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.
2. Although reading and rereading of texts has continued throughout the course of this Ph.D., the writing of this, and the following chapter, as a review of literature, was started before and whilst data was being collected. In consequence, the choice of some of the texts was made in response to the phenomenon which was unfolding throughout the exhibition - that is to say, from September 1999 - July 2000. Thus, where I occasionally comment on this research study in terms of the educational programme, I do so in the past tense but without the benefit of hindsight informed by an analysis of the data. Had this been done the research would have been theorized before it had been investigated.
3. For a description of the children's museum activities see Appendix III.
4. One aspect of this study which has given me much food for thought has been the issue of *aesthetics*. For, while I accept the ancient Greek definition of *æsthesis* as 'perception through the senses', and would therefore consider the children's experience to have been broadly 'aesthetic', I am aware that the 'aesthetic' is an ideological concept which has had numerous cultural meanings throughout the history of Western civilization. For example, Diané Collison (1992), describes how an ancient Greek interpretation differs from an eighteenth century one. She says:

For the Greeks at the time of Aristotle (384-322BC) the word was 'æsthesis'. It referred to both sensation and perception and meant, in general, 'perception by means of the senses'. At that time it had no special application to the perception of works of art and beauty; it described every kind of perception based on the senses and it marked out one side of a division that was important in Greek thought, namely, the division between the sensory perception of things and the intellectual apprehension of them. It was not until the eighteenth century that it began to be used more specifically in connection with art and beauty. In 1735, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten introduced the term 'æsthetics' to name his 'science of perception'. Baumgarten's study was not confined to art and beauty but in due course, as others adopted his terminology and became influenced by his ideas, 'æsthetics' and 'the æsthetic' came to be used predominantly in discussions of art and beauty, though not always with the exact meanings given to them by Baumgarten (Collison, in Hanfling, 1992:112).

Commenting about the *æsthetic*/anti-*æsthetic* from a late twentieth century standpoint, Hal

Foster (1983), explains:

The adventures of the æsthetic make up one of the great narratives of modernity: from the time of its autonomy through art-for-art's-sake to its status as a necessary negative category, a critique of the world as it is. It is this last moment that is hard to relinquish: the notion of the æsthetic as subversive, a critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world ... Here then, 'anti-æsthetic' is the sign not of a modern nihilism - which so often transgressed the law only to confirm it - but rather of a critique which destructures the order of representations in order to reinscribe them (Foster,1983: xv).

And taking a reflective view of æsthetic theory down the centuries, Arthur Danto (1987), comments:

The irrelevance of æsthetic theory is due to the fact that it has often been a response to a particular body of art and of limited applications to another order. Plato, Aristotle, Hume and Kant, powerful and sympathetic thinkers all, were giving universal validity to thoughts suited to a very local art, so that in large measure esthetic theory is a body of criticism concealed as such by the unacknowledged provincialisms of its authors (Danto, in Murray,2003:4).

Following on from Danto's argument, I want to point out that it was the philosophy of Descartes during the Enlightenment which not only fostered a theoretical split of the mind and body (I think, therefore I am) but encouraged an ocular-centrist approach to art. By privileging the visual seeing became conflated with understanding, was heightened in status by becoming a branch of philosophy as 'æsthetics', and in the process marginalized the body. In an unpublished essay entitled, *Bodily Encounters - Artefacts and Embodiment*, written as part of a 'Museums and Galleries in Education' MA course, Ana Rita Canavarró (2003), says:

Drawing attention to the world and then to the body, the notion of embodiment triggered the 'perceptual revolution' (Lowe,1982:111) that sought to overcome a long imposed tradition of Cartesian intellectualism. As Mellor and Shilling (1997:22), point out: [It is] the tendency towards 'losing touch' with the embodied basis of knowledge which characterises modern forms of bodily being in the world. This 'loss of touch' has been integral to the establishment of the rational Enlightenment project that treats people as undifferentiated minds (Canavarró,2003:6).

For the purposes of this study and in accordance with an understanding of experience as an embodied phenomenon, I have first of all decided not to categorize the children's awareness as a solely visual encounter but rather embrace its tactile and verbal dimensions; and second, have decided not to consider these facets of their awareness as 'æsthetic' in a purist sense but rather as sensuous facets which could be described as broadly 'æsthetic'. To reinforce this position I suggest that children's experiences of objects though sensuous in character, eventually become influenced by the context in which their encounter takes place. In other words, codes of experiencing objects are culturally and socially conditioned, and the meanings which result are likewise culturally constructed. For example, to experience an ancient ceramic chalice in a museum display-case would be entirely different to experiencing it on a shelf in a supermarket or department store. While the inaccessibility of the object in the museum sets it apart, gives it a sense of 'aura' and confers a set of cultural values (including a set of æsthetic values) consistent with the institution which houses it; the essence of an object in a supermarket is its total accessibility, relative affordability and replicability. The display of Duchamp's Readymades in the early decades of the twentieth century was one attempt in which these cultural values were exposed.

Though I devote one section of this chapter to that extraordinarily heightened sensuous encounter which is called 'an æsthetic experience', and acknowledge that children might

have had one such experience, I do so in order to differentiate it from the sensuously varied ways in which the children seemed to be aware throughout their time in the museum.

5. The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines art as, 'the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power' (Pearsall and Hanks, 2001:93). Because many of the exhibits which the children saw and touched during their museum experience were made as objects of use rather than 'art' objects, I have decided to use the words ancient Egyptian 'object' rather than ancient Egyptian 'art'. This, I believe, is consistent with Adorno's (1970), view that, 'art is not an absolute given, but a historically changing conglomeration of ideas and objects' (Adorno, in Murray, 2003:4).

6. This point has a resonance with the work of the French Situationist, Guy Debord (1992). In his film script, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord writes:

The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail, heralds itself as an immense accumulation of SPECTACLES. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation. The images that detach themselves from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream where the unity of life can no longer be re-established. Reality considered PARTIALLY unfolds itself in its own general unity as a pseudo-world APART, an object of mere contemplation (Debord,1992:61).

7. Merleau-Ponty explains that, it is only phenomenology, as a 'rigorous science, which tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is ... by re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with philosophical status' (1962:vii).

8. Merleau-Ponty (1962), acknowledges Hume's contribution to an understanding of existence but does not agree that this needs substantiating. He says, 'Hume went, in intention, further than anyone in radical reflection, since he genuinely tried to take us back to those phenomena of which we have experience, on the hither side of any formation of ideas - even though he went on to emasculate this experience' (1962:220).

9. Merleau-Ponty is at odds with Warnock (1976), here; he had no need for the imagination because perception was an immediate bodily communion with the world.

10. Sartre's explanation of daydreams (hallucinations) and imagination is relevant. When a daydream takes place the image is so absorbing that the whole of the person's perception is taken up by it. Furthermore, because the experience is so fascinating and there are strong feelings connected with it, the daydream assumes a sense of reality. If the daydream is considered through reflection and/or posited in an auditory space by being related, its reality is relived (Sartre, in Warnock,1976:164-165).

11. Sartre explains that while perception relates to the world as it is or seems to be, the imagination has the flexibility to assume an unprescribed position vis à vis the objects of the world. Discussing Sartre's theory, Egan(1992), says, 'the imagination's independence from the objective constraints of the perceived world allows it freedom over space and time. They can be stretched, reversed, obliterated or whatever. This freedom is a condition of the non-existence of the "nothingness" of the objects of imagination' (Sartre, in Egan,1992:28-29).

12. The point I am making here is simply to contrast a theoretical position which supports a philosophical argument, and an account of lived experience which is a description of human thoughts, actions and feelings. Because meaning can be conveyed through both theory and description, it would have been far more enlightening to me if these scholars had included some of the latter to illustrate their points. It could be argued of course, that an account of lived experience describes a personal position, but although this is strictly the case, it does not set out to be rhetorical in the same way as philosophy.

13. In an article entitled, 'Emotions, feelings, and art education', Ann Sherman (1983), argues that the terms emotions and feelings are often used interchangeably as if their meanings were identical. Citing Peters (1972), and Solomon (1977), she reveals that emotions involve more than feelings or sensations, they involve judgments and behaviours. Louis Arnaud Reid (1986), also distinguishes, feelings from emotions. He says, 'We should look at how the thing called 'feeling' operates in concrete experience. While there is a conceptual distinction between 'feeling' as mental awareness and 'feeling' as sensory and neurological processes of the organism, nevertheless the two are inseparably related. Thus, feeling is immediate awareness of human experience from the inside, and as such cognitive' (Reid,1986:20).

Commenting on Reid's definition Alan Simpson (1986), says, 'Feeling is subjective in that it is peculiar to us as individuals: no one else can have or share exactly my, or your, feelings and thoughts. Moreover, feeling, in so far as it underpins consciousness in lived experience, has an indeterminate range and variety of color and emphasis, or "affect", with which language, which is limited and general, cannot cope; feeling is the "given" of experience that is not definable further' (Simpson,1986:134).

Merleau-Ponty(1962), discusses feeling from a phenomenological perspective as that state of awareness of ourselves and the world through sensation. To be aware then, we reflect on the way we *feel* as a result of our sensuous interactions with the world. Thus, our feelings are embodied signs of the way we are. This can be as simple as a feeling response, for example: feeling hot or cold, tasting something sweet or sour, or hearing something loud or soft; alternatively it can something complex like a state of mind, for example: feeling angry, sad, lonely or frightened.

14. Summing up his ideas on seeing as an embodied phenomenon Elkins says:

The eye prefers smoothly bounded objects that are more like bodies to shattered collections of things that cannot be thought of as bodies. It also occurs to me that my thinking is heavily dependent on my various concepts of the body, its weights and heights, its inside and outside, its limbs and head, its many metaphors. But all of this is uncognized. Bodies are woven so deeply and tightly into our thought that we have to work to see how little we would understand without them (Elkins,1996:159).

15. Van Manen (2002), gives a very expansive phenomenological definition of the term essence. He explains:

Phenomenologically speaking essence is a complex notion that alludes to the ever questionable ways of the being of being, to the ways that a phenomenon reveals itself in thinking, to the ways that we encounter something, and to the ways that we ourselves are constantly put into question by the being of the things of our world. The term essence does not describe the whatness of a phenomenon but it describes the meaning relations that we maintain with the world. Essence is a relational term that refers to the intentionalities of our world, to the possible ways of encountering and relating to the things of our world before and while we understand or think them in language and poetic and conceptual thought(van Manen,2002(a):Glossary 4).

By probing the children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects I am trying to understand what it is like to *be* a child in that situation. The essence of the children's encounter therefore should reveal shared factors which can then contribute to an understanding of human experience.

16. In his principal text, *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1973), embarks upon the ontological project of trying to understand what being, or Dasein (there-being) is. Although the tenor of the quotation on page 58 might seem to suggest that there is only one absolute truth, he is quick to remind us that we need to consider, 'whether man is not the only preserver of unconcealed beings, but is precisely the custodian of the openness of Being. Only if we know that we do not know who we are do we ground the one and only ground which may release the

future of a simple, essential existence (Dasein) of historical man from itself. This ground is the essence of truth' (Heidegger, 1984:163).

17. When discussing 'high' art, Heidegger's text, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950) refers to art as the, 'one essential grounding of the essence of truth'. Accordingly, to consider a work of art is to be clear about its origin or essence, and as *thing-ness* - as a bearer of properties; as a unity of a manifold of sensations; and as formed matter (1993a:156). However, though all of these contribute to the work as an object, they do not represent the work's essence. Clarifying the latter, he says art becomes unconcealed in the way in which it relates to the strife between world and earth - world is never an object which stands before us and can be looked at - it is the ever non-objective to which we are subject - the world worlds as a happening - and, as we live the world through sense-relations, meaning-relations and significance-relations, things become objects for us (1993a:170). Earth on the other hand, is the substance or materials of the work which are opened up or unconcealed as it exists in the world as *thing-ness*. (1993a:172). Moreover, it is this thing-ness, the strife between earth and world, as an unfolding embodied unconcealment which is the essence of truth. But, because the unconcealedness of the essence of truth is never fully revealed it will always be partly concealed. The following two quotations encapsulate the above. Heidegger maintains:

The artwork opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e. this revealing, i.e. the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the artwork, the truth of beings has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work (Heidegger, 1993a:165).

According to this highest standard, anything that would present itself as art must be measured as a way of letting truth come into being in these beings, which, as works, enchantingly transport man into the intimacy of Being while imposing on him the luminosity of the unconcealed and disposing him and determining him to be the custodian of the truth of Being (Heidegger, 1984:164).

18. One significant feature of Raney's Report (1997), cited above was the crucial role of education in triggering children's curiosity. See p. 54.

19. See Chapter 1, Note 16 for an explanation of 'lived experience'.

20. It seems to me, Ewens (1990), conflates the experience of being wonderstruck with having an 'aesthetic' - or especially heightened sensuous experience. Though he doesn't specify, he may be alluding to extraordinary visual events.

21. The philosopher, Albert Tsugawa (1968), coined the term, 'the immediately sensuous'.

22. The Gestalt theory of body and ground explains how objects can be seen. In order to see individual objects a background is vital because it helps to define the contours of the object through difference. While the latter may be different in texture and colour, it is almost certain to be spatially different from the former, which may often lack a defined boundary (Wade and Swanston: 1991: 32-33). However, the process of differentiating an object from a background is not just a simple matter of identification, rather it involves the construction of significant meanings which underpin their spatial relations or interconnectedness (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:236).

23. See Note 4 above.

24. See Note 4 with reference to ocular-centrism.

25. Numerous philosophers use the term 'disinterested' when describing both a sense of involvement and detachment from a perceived object during an 'aesthetic' experience. For example, when describing 'disinterestedness', Schopenhauer claims that, 'the attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will. Thus it considers things without interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively;

it is entirely given up to them' (Schopenhauer, in Collison, 1992:115). The crucial question is, is it possible to be simultaneously conscious of being involved with an object and yet detached from it? Surely to be conscious of an action implies intentionality, which also implies the compliance of the will. Moreover, if one is detached sufficiently to feel will-less the very notion of being conscious of that detachment suggests a sense of involvement.

Kant interpreted 'disinterestedness' somewhat differently. In his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), he distinguishes between the higher realm of aesthetic judgment/contemplation which is 'disinterested', and interested judgment which is concerned with sensual pleasures akin to appetite. He explains:

The satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called 'interest'. Such satisfaction always has reference to the faculty of desire, with as its determining ground or as necessarily connected with its determining ground. Now when the question is if a thing is beautiful, we do not want to know whether anything depends or can depend on the existence of the thing, either for myself or for anyone else, but how we judge it by mere observation (intuition of reflection) ... we easily see that in saying [an object] is *beautiful* and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste (Kant, in Tilman and Cahn, 1969:146-147).

26. Csikszentmihayli and Robinson (1990), describe the 'flow' experience as having a heightened state of consciousness which is often characteristic of an aesthetic experience (1990:viii).

27. In *Civilizing Rituals - Inside Public Art Museums*, Carol Duncan (1995), explains how the function of modern art is informed by a particular ideology which underpins and is consistent with the values and beliefs of those who wield influence and power in public art institutions. She suggests:

Despite their success in academia and high criticism, these new art histories have won very little ground in public art museums. That is, they have won very little ground that is visible. This resistance is not surprising. Like science and history museums, public art museums are mediating institutions, situated between academic and critical communities on one side, and, on the other, trustees, the museum-going public, and, on occasion, state officials, all of whom expect museums to confirm their own beliefs about art. Most art museums are caught in the middle. Their curatorial staff may share many of the views of their academic colleagues; but, the government-supported and/or tax-free public institutions in which they work are under pressure to present forms of knowledge which have recognizable meaning and value for a broader community. They are expected to augment and reinforce the community's collective knowledge about itself and its place in the world, and to preserve the memory of its most important and generally accepted values and beliefs. Therefore, especially where permanent collections of art are concerned, museums tend to reaffirm familiar, widely held notions about art and art history. In all but a few public museums today, that translates into conservative art-historical narratives (Duncan, 1995:103).

By selecting employees from one art institution, Csikszentmihayli and Robinson (1990), limited the scope of their research, as it was probable that all these people would be influenced by the values and beliefs of that museum.

28. In Terry Eagleton's (1990), text *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, he makes the point that:

The construction of the modern notion of the aesthetic artefact is thus

inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class-society, and indeed from a whole new form of human subjectivity appropriate to that social order. It is on this account, rather than because men and women have suddenly awoken to the supreme value of painting and poetry, that aesthetics plays so obtrusive a role in the intellectual heritage of the present. But my argument is also that the aesthetic, understood in a certain sense, provides an unusually powerful challenge and alternative to these dominant ideological forms, and is in this sense an eminently contradictory phenomenon (Eagleton, 1990:3).

Thus, Eagleton's point is not merely that what is recognised and categorized as 'art' represents the cultural values of its time underpinned by the ideological thinking of the most powerful, but also that the aesthetic has the power to threaten and undermine these cultural values and thereby challenge what is recognized as 'art' by the establishment (in common with Adorno).

29. In section 1.3 and 1.5, I referred to Merleau-Ponty's (1962), theory of perception as that preconscious, preconceptual state when the body and the world are at one. If the ancient Greek definition of 'aesthesia,' as perception of the world through the senses is acknowledged (Collison, 1992:112), it could be argued that all experiences - as conscious/sensory events - could be termed 'aesthetic'. Moreover, because all contact with the world is sensory, when any object is encountered it will elicit sensory responses which (using the ancient Greek definition) could be categorized as 'aesthetic'. However, if it is accepted that the concepts of 'art' and the 'aesthetic' are historically and culturally constructed, there can be no guarantee that the 'artistic' or 'aesthetic' (whatever we define these terms as) status of objects will be acknowledged.

Paul Schumacher's article, 'Art for existence sake: a Heideggerian revision' (1990), makes the point that because art and artefacts are different they are consumed differently. Thus, though artefacts are serviceable and reliable, it is only art which discloses the truth of existence - and as such transcends the individual. While this argument is interesting it is dated and limiting. The definition which describes art as uniquely human, having both its origin and end in human community, (1990:83), is narrow and could be applied to man-made objects of use. The practice of displaying rare objects in museums does much to heighten their status, positioning them within a more 'aesthetic' frame of reference thereby allowing them to be consumed as art even though they might well have been objects used on an everyday basis. Bourdieu's text, *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste*, is also relevant; see Chapter 3, Note 17, for a brief discussion.

30. When descriptions of some aesthetic experiences are analysed, it is often the case that knowledge of the experience eludes description. Research into the speechlessness of this type of aesthetic experience might be a potential way of accessing the life-world or the pre-reflective sphere of human being.

31. Although Susan Lederman and Roberta Klatzky (1998), cite Bushnell and Boudreau's work (1991), which showed that exploratory procedures are actually first used to haptically access various kinds of object properties during infancy; and Ruff's (1989), work on infant manual exploration and haptic object recognition; their own research has focused mainly on the haptic perceptions of adults. However, they conducted one small study on pre-school children in 1993, and found that, 'children used appropriate haptic EP's (exploratory procedures) for the material properties [of objects] and confined their exploration to vision when judging size and shape, as has been found with adults. Clearly, manual exploration serves an important role for children as well as adults' (Lederman and Klatzky, 1998:32).

Bruner's (1969), essay, 'Eye, hand and mind', though written far earlier is nevertheless, very informative about the way in which an infant orients physically to the world. Initially, he describes how the development of hand and eye, and hand and mouth coordination begins when the child's attention is directed outward to stimuli in search of something on which to fasten. The child then learns as it begins to use its hand, to move from one object to another, and gradually to discriminate between objects rather than merely encounter them. The role of the mouth and the whole of the body is crucial in these procedures, and by four months

the sequence, reach-capture-retrieve-mouth is established, so that what is held is immediately brought to the mouth for inspection. Eventually when this procedure is refined the mouthing stage is eliminated, and the reaching, grasping and retrieving become integrated into different activities (Bruner, in Elkind and Flavell, 1969:223-235).

32. From an American, physiological perspective, Lederman (1998), suggests three reasons why research into the sense of touch has been slow: first, though medieval scholars recorded what they knew about the human body they were prohibited from writing about the skin; second, in N. America the sense of touch has been played down because it was often regarded as being too erotic; and third, despite being the oldest of the sensitive tissues, it has been difficult to access (Lederman, in Verry, 1998:64). Today, with the rise of the neurosciences - neurophysiology, neuropsychology and medical imaging, in addition to psychophysics, there is far more knowledge about somatic responses and particularly about the sense of touch (Lederman, in Verry, 1998:65).

33. Although Lederman has been researching the skin, the sense of touch, and the way in which our haptic sense functions in perception, both singly and corporately with Klatzky and Metzger, I have selected four texts which summarize their findings. These are Lederman, Klatzky and Metzger, (1985), Lederman, (1997), Lederman in conversation with Verry, (1998), and Lederman and Klatzky (1998). Because this research covers touch and the skin, and touching objects, I have commented on their work in both this and the following section.

34. In an article entitled, 'Don't take touch for granted', Lederman (1998), explains that it is easier to imagine what it might be like to be blind or deaf by blindfolding ourselves or wearing ear-plugs, than it is to imagine what it might be like to be without a sense of touch. Consequently we tend to take it for granted (Lederman, in Verry, 1998:64).

35. The expressions: he's a soft touch; she has the human touch; please get in touch; handle him with kid gloves; I'm very thin skinned; he's always touchy; that gesture was so touching; that film gave me goose pimples; that remark wasn't very tactful; he's so old fashioned - really out of touch; that was so unfeeling; he's so callous; that music sent a tingle down my spine - all convey metaphorical references to touch .

36. Van Manen (1990), explains how phenomenology uses poetry as a way of trying to access the pre-reflective sphere of existence. Citing Merleau-Ponty, he explains:

So phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project; it tries in incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world (Merleau-Ponty, in van Manen, 1990:13).

37. Here Martin (1981) is referring to ocular-centrism. See Note 4 above.

38. Lederman (1997) and (1998), tells us that the hand has four populations of mechanoreceptors amounting to 17,000 in all. See page 74 above. These are of differing types namely: the *Meissner* corpuscles which respond to low-frequency vibrations similar to fluttering; the *Pacinian* corpuscles which respond to high-frequency vibrations similar to buzzing; and the *Merkel* and *Ruffini* cylinders which respond to steady-state stimulation. In addition there are thermoreceptors which are sensitive to temperature change. This information reveals that the hand has great potential to respond in an acutely sensitive manner not only to outside stimuli but to the body itself.

39. Here Martin (1986), is using the term 'aesthetic' to indicate a heightened state of consciousness/awareness. See Note 4 above.

40. Löwenfeld (1939), was one of the first scholars to explain the word 'haptic' in his book, *The Nature of Creative Activity*. He says, 'the world of those who "see haptically" is a world confined to things that can be perceived by means of our senses of touch or bodily sensations. In this world the eye does not mediate between reality and the concept' (1939:85).

41. Piaget tried to understand how children's thinking developed, and from his experiments identified five different stages which he believed were progressively and systematically reached. These were: The Sensory-motor period (birth-18 months/2 years); Pre-conceptual intelligence (2-4 years); Intuitive thinking (4-7) years; Concrete operations (8-11 years); and Formal operations (11-14/15 years) (Stones, 1966:132-142).

42. This MA report was written as part of the 'Museums and Galleries in Education' course run by the Institute of Education, University of London.

43. The literary and cultural critic, Walter Benjamin is well-known for his discussion of the notion of 'aura' with reference to art. In his essay, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', he argued that the advent of mass-produced images destroyed the 'aura' - authenticity, presence or magical aesthetic power, which the art establishment invested in unique works of art. Commenting on Benjamin's argument Briony Fer says: 'As a Marxist, Benjamin analysed how a society's culture was determined by its basic economic and technical means of production ... the unique, authentic "aura" of the individual art work was the residue of the past, and easel painting was now an irrelevance ... it was in film that Benjamin saw the greatest critical possibilities of contemporary culture' (Fer, in Fer, Batchelor and Wood, 1993:163-164). For a further discussion of the phenomenon of 'aura' applied to children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects, see Note 17 in Chapter 7.

44. Fisher (1996:78), reinforces this by citing several educational studies namely, The Bristol Study, 'Language at home and at school', directed by Gordon Wells (1981, 1986); the research of Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes (1984), and the work of the National Oracy Project.

45. Vygotsky (1986), noted how young children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech as well as their eyes and hands, and use language as a way of sorting out their thoughts. At first, language and action are often fused together, which is why young children are often heard talking to themselves when they are engaged in an activity' (Vygotsky in Fisher, 1996:78).

In his text, *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky (1986), discusses a number of Piaget's theories regarding the development of communication and speech in children, 'egocentrism' being one particular topic. Unlike Piaget (1959), who considered 'egocentrism' or speech-for-oneself to be not only incomprehensible to others but characteristic of the child's early linguistic phase which eventually dies out, Vygotsky believed it to be a transitory form which could be located between social, communicative speech and inner speech (1986: xxxvi). Contextualizing Vygotsky's work, Alex Kozulin (1986), says:

Vygotsky returned to the problem of inner speech in connection with a study of generalization versus contextualization of word meaning. He made a distinction between word meaning (*znachenie*), which reflects a generalized concept, and word sense (*smysl*), which depends on the context of speech. The sense of a word is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in a person's consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, complex, fluid whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense. According to Vygotsky, the preponderance of sense over meaning, of sentence over word, and of context over sentence are rules of inner speech. While meaning stands for socialized discourse, sense represents an interface between one's individual (and thus incommunicable) thinking and verbal thought comprehensible to others. Inner speech is not an internal aspect of talking; it is a function in itself. It remains, however a form of speech, that is, thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words must subliminate in order to bring forth a thought (Kozulin, in Vygotsky, 1986: xxxvii- xxxviii).

46. While I acknowledge that the term accuracy can be a contentious term because it has overtones of the precision of 'scientific' measurement, in this instance I interpret it as a

description which accords with a subjective assessment of what has been experienced.

47. In Raney's (1997), report on visual literacy, mentioned above, she discusses how the verbal and visual communicate meaning. Because this is such a fundamental issue for this study I want to quote some of her findings and also include some comments from two of her interviewees, First she says:

Verbal and visual signs then, may have comparable internal scales of clarity. That does not mean that signs designed to be clear and direct are received in that way. Nor does it mean that words and images operate in the same way. Four of the lines along which word and image are commonly said to differ are sketched out below... words and images exist differently in space and time. Words are said to be apprehended in linear sequence while visual representations are said to be taken in as a whole ... Words and images differ in the nature of their relationship to what they refer to. Words are said to have a mostly arbitrary link to their referent - they acquire meaning by conjuring up the kind of percepts to which the social world has related them. Most visual signs on the other hand work by replicating some of the features or structural relationships of what they stand for ... Words and images differ in their analytic capability. Verbal language can both describe, that is to account for particular features of something, and analyse - draw generalisations, indicate causality. Visual signs can vividly describe, but can be analytic in only a limited way as they lack explicit indicators of causality ... Words and images are processed differently by the brain. Questions of how the brain processes images and words are implicated in any discussion about their differences or similarities (Raney,1997:34-35).

Commenting on W.J.T. Mitchell's ideas; she reveals, 'the relation between visual and verbal is a social one absorbing all the conflicts and complexities of a culture. Images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage ... the irony of what Mitchell sees as a struggle for dominance between the linguistic and pictorial signs is that 'the visual' and 'the verbal' always live inside one another' (Raney,1997:37).

From a pedagogical position Raney (1997), states that education is always verbal because it performs the social function of passing on ideas which help children to develop intellectually, socially and emotionally (1997:71). As Martin Kemp says, 'without words we couldn't articulate the visual experience, we couldn't communicate it adequately even to ourselves. The situation is one of deep symbiosis, not dependence. Words are the tools for discussing the business of seeing ...' (Kemp, in Raney,1997:38).

These quotations not only highlight how words and images interact to help us find meaning, but they have a bearing on how children navigate through the waters of visual culture. Furthermore, they have hermeneutic significance for researching those meanings at second hand. In Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, I discuss how children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects became meaningful, and how I tried to move towards an understanding of those meanings through interpretation.

48. Although there are some similarities between hermeneutic phenomenology and discourse analysis, the fundamental teleological and ontological difference is, that whereas hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand human being by focusing on the meanings of lived experience, discourse analysis attempts to understand the meaning of language. According to Merleau-Ponty, 'phenomenology ... is a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins - as 'an inalienable presence'; and all efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with philosophical status' (Merleau-Ponty,1962:vii). Hermeneutics are then employed to interpret the data gathered not merely from speech and the silences in between, but by considering gestures exhibited throughout the particular lived experience. Semiotics are then used as a way of describing the experience. While I accept that both disciplines analyze verbal statements with a view to finding 'the time-bomb of meaning', and both accept that researchers and researched are constructed through language, (Gadamer,1975:271-273; and Candlin, in Coulthard,1985:preface ix), the reasons for doing

so are different. Though there is no one definition of discourse analysis, and an increasing number of disciplines have a bearing upon it namely: philosophy, psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, anthropology, ethnography of speaking, phonetics and linguistics, Coulthard tells us that an explanation is not hard to find. He says, 'while all linguists would agree that *human communication* must be described in terms of at least three levels - meaning, form and substance, or *discourse, lexico-grammar and phonology* - there are disagreements over the boundaries of linguistics' (Coulthard,1985:1,3). He then goes on to explain by referring to Firth (1951), that because language is a way of behaving, language must be considered contextually in order to find the meaning (Coulthard,1985:1). Therefore, discourse analysis is, 'the characterization of speaker/writer-meaning and its explanation in the context of use' (Candlin, in Coulthard,1985:preface viii). Hermeneutic phenomenology on the other hand does not seek to explain, it seeks to describe, 'the things themselves'; it is for the interpreter to find meaning by resonating with aspects of the description through personal relevance which is sometimes referred to as 'the phenomenological nod'. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of the hermeneutic phenomenological method. It is therefore, because I wanted to explore the existential meanings of the children's encounter with ancient Egyptian objects, as one particular lived experience, that I chose hermeneutic phenomenology rather than discourse analysis.

49. In their book on qualitative educational research, Maykut and Morehouse (1994), explain how students and teachers have tended to regard qualitative research as inferior to quantitative studies. Paradoxically, despite being able to understand the former better than quantitative/experimental studies, they regarded qualitative research as less rigorous and therefore of less educational value (1994:ix). If the latter's observation is correct, it might go some way to indicating why quantitative research has traditionally and erroneously tended to be privileged by providing objective authentic proof, and why I have found a paucity of qualitative research to inform my own work. However, with a growing interest in the philosophic underpinnings of research and research methodologies, qualitative studies are no longer regarded as inferior to quantitative research, and indeed as Denzin and Lincoln (1994), state, there is a growing hybridization between these two overarching descriptions of research practices. See Chapter 4. David Scott also explains:

In one form or another the debate about quantitative and qualitative research has been taking place since at least the mid-nineteenth century. At that time there was much argument about the scientific status of history and the social sciences, with quantification often being seen as one of the key features of natural science ... By the 1940s and 50s, in sociology and psychology and some other fields, quantitative method (in the form of survey and experimental research) had become the dominant approach. However, since the 1960s, there has been a revival in the fortunes of qualitative types of research in these disciplines, to the point where their legitimacy is widely accepted (Scott,1997:44).

He then goes on to say that while it has often been assumed that the criterion for a quantitative method is dealing with numerical data and a qualitative method is dealing with verbal data, this demarcation is too simplistic. Many research projects combine the two and in consequence it cannot be assumed that there are only two methodological paradigms. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of how hermeneutic phenomenology is used as a qualitative research methodology in this study.

CHAPTER THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

3.1 A Floor Plan of the Myers Museum, Eton College

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ANCIENT OBJECTS USED WITH THE TREASURE HUNT FROM THE EXHIBITION

‘The Collector’s Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College’
THE MYERS MUSEUM
1999 -2000

- 3.2 Vessel in the form of a fish - Faïence. c. 1375 BC. Height 12 cm.
- 3.3 Baboon of Thoth - Egyptian Blue. c.1350 BC. Height 4.5 cm.
- 3.4 Mirror with a maiden handle - Bronze. c. 1375 BC. Height 19 cm.
- 3.5 Syrian ? Head - Shell with stone and glass inlays. c. 1350 BC. Height 4 cm.
- 3.6 Shabti - Limestone. c. 1350 BC. Height 24.5 cm.
- 3.7 Fragment from the coffin of the Master Builder, Amenhotep - Painted, gilded and inlaid wood. c.1425 BC. Height 183 cm.
- 3.8 Statue of Mesehty - Wood. c. 2000 BC. Height 62 cm.
- 3.9 Sistrum - Faïence. c.945 BC. Height 23.5 cm.
- 3.10 Crocodile - Faïence. c. 1720 BC. Length 5.5 cm.
- 3.11 Hedgehog Scaraboid - Green and Blue Faïence. c.1350 BC. Height 1.5 cm.
- 3.12 Amulet of Isis and Horus - Faïence. c. 945 BC. Height 5.5 cm.
- 3.13 Chalice in the form of a white lotus - Faïence. c. 945 BC. Height 8 cm.
- 3.14 Winged Nut - Polychrome Faïence. c. 1295 BC. Height 26.5 cm.
- 3.15 Bowl with fish around a central pool - Faïence. c.1400 BC. Diameter 15 cm.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ANCIENT OBJECTS USED AS A HANDLING COLLECTION

3.16 A SHABTI c. 350 BC Late Period; 30 Dynasty

Light blue faïence, plain tripartite wig, divine beard, hands on chest clutching pick, hoe and basket rope; feet on square base, dorsal pillar; T-shaped text.
Size H. 11.1 cm. W. 2.9 cm. T. 2.1 cm.

3.17 COFFIN FRAGMENTS - INLAID EYES c. 2000 - 1600 BC Middle Kingdom

Pair of inlaid eyes, probably from a coffin; pupils of black stone (?) with calcite eyes set in gypsum within wide copper or bronze frames.
Size (Ave) L. 5.1cm. H. 2.3 cm. T. 2.5 cm.

3.18 A MUMMY - CAT HEAD PIECE c. 700 -100 BC Late Period

Hollow bronze head piece from the mummy of a cat finely modelled.

Size H. 14.0 cm. W. 10.8 cm. L. 12.0 cm.

3.19 A CANOPIC JAR LID; HAPY c. 700 - 300 BC Late Period (?)

Gessoed wooden stopper from a canopic jar, taking the form of a baboon head of the god Hapy; eyes picked out in black .

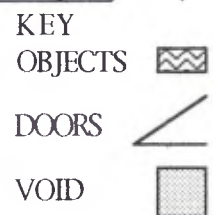
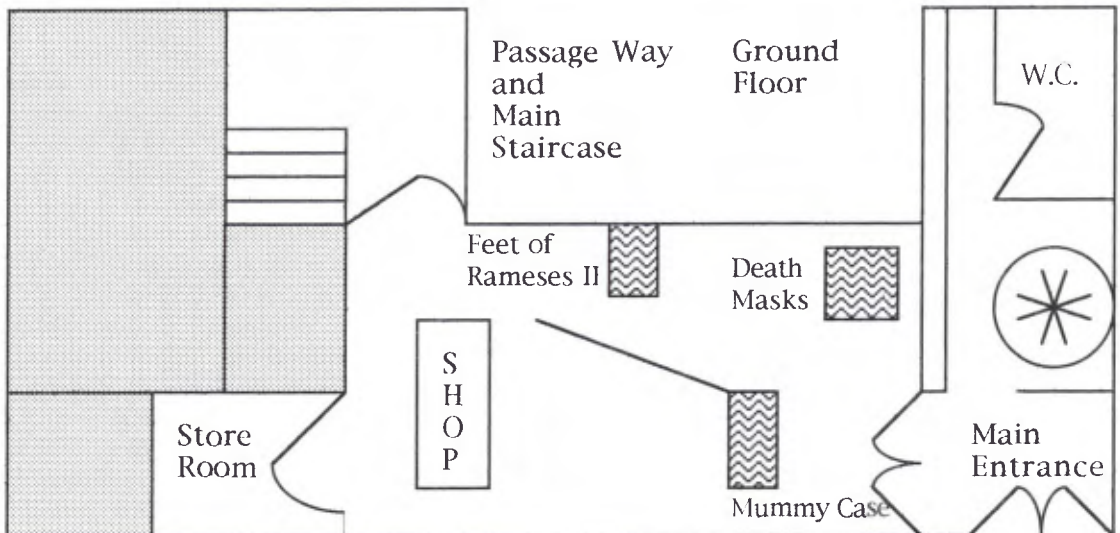
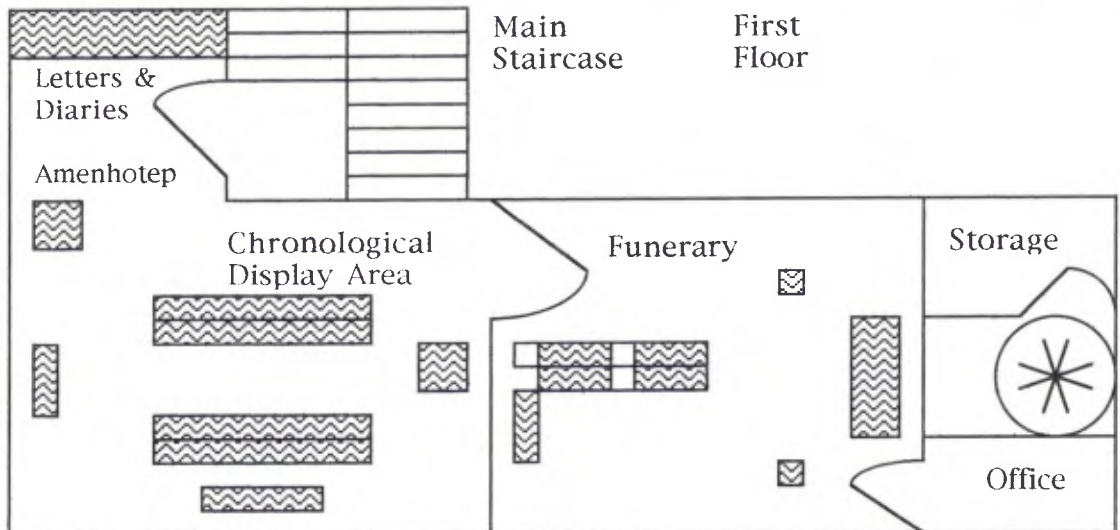
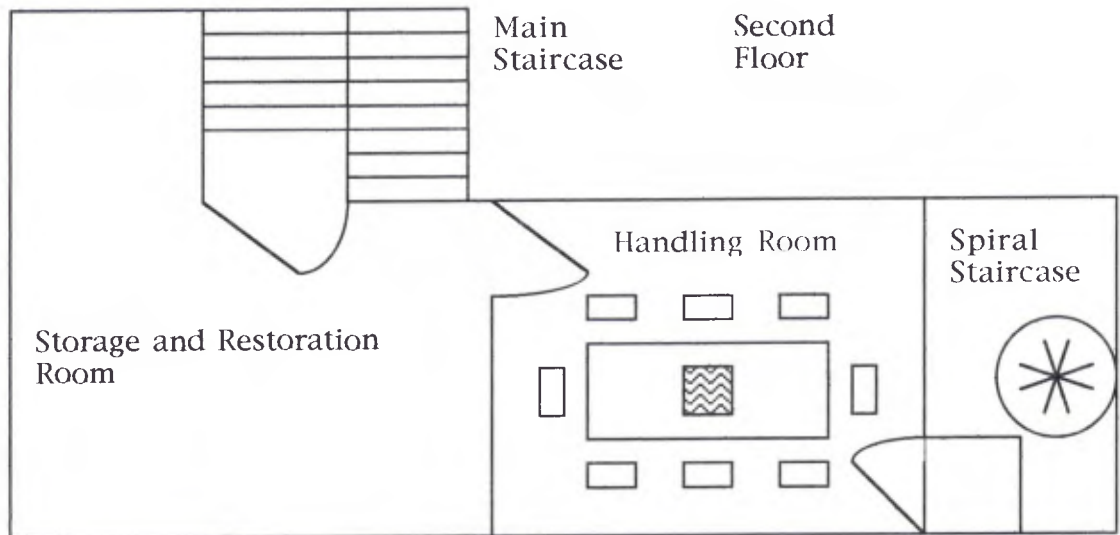
Size H. 12.0 cm. D. 13.3 cm.

3.20 A HEADREST c. 2500 - 2100 BC Old Kingdom

Wooden headrest of characteristic form, made in three parts, dowelled.

Undecorated with remains of linen on upper surface.

Size H. 20.6 cm. W. 23.8 cm. T 8.5 cm.



3.1
The Myers Museum
Floor Plan

3.2 Faience Fish Vessel
c. 1375 BC



3.3 Baboon of Thoth
c.1350 BC



3.4 Mirror with a maiden handle
c. 1375 BC.

3.5 Syrian ? Head c. 1350 BC



3.6 Shabti c. 1350 BC



3.7 Coffin Fragment
c.1425 BC



3.8 Statue of Mesehty
c. 2000 BC

3.9 Sistrum
c.945 BC



3.10 Crocodile
c. 1720 BC



3.11 Hedgehog Scaraboid
c.1350 BC



3.12 Amulet of Isis and Horus
c. 945 BC



3.13 White Lotus Chalice
c. 945 BC



3.14 Winged Nut
c. 1295 BC



3.15 Bowl with fish around a pool
c.1400 BC



3.17 Coffin Fragments: Inlaid Eyes c. 2000 - 1600 BC: Handling Collection



3.18 A Mummy Cat Head Piece c. 700 -100 BC: Handling Collection



3.19 A Canopic Jar Lid; Hapy c. 700 - 300 BC: Handling Collection





3.20 A Headrest c. 2500 - 2100 BC: Handling Collection

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEACHING AND RESEARCHING CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter aims to situate the museum as the context where my teaching and research took place, using a descriptive and critically reflective approach¹. In the Myers Museum I not only ran an educational programme for children aged between seven to eleven, but also investigated their experiences. The result of fulfilling these two roles simultaneously often meant that it was difficult to establish where one function stopped and the other began².

As the children's contextual experience is the principal focus of this chapter, my objective is to help the reader picture the children as they encountered the museum space and took part in the activities. These experiences were complex and diverse, ranging from the physical context to the social context in terms of the pedagogical relationships which developed between the children and myself. Initially, I set the scene with background information about ancient Egyptian objects, the museum and the exhibition.

1. THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT:

1.1 Ancient Egyptian Objects:

A recent article from *The Times* newspaper headlined, 'Secrets of the mummy return in Egypt dig', revealed that three mummies aged 5,600 years old had been found by archaeologists in Hierakonopolis, causing all Egyptologists to rethink their understanding of the earliest known practice of mummification (Rumbelow and Sharp, in *The Times*, 2001:9). This news was big news, not just for the archaeological community, but for the general public too; as Taylor, a leading Egyptian scholar says, 'It is a major leap forward for our understanding of Ancient Egypt. We have to revise our standard thinking of that time to show it was a society much more sophisticated than anyone had thought' (Taylor, in *The Times*, 2001:9).

This example of a present day archaeological discovery helps to focus the mind on this ancient civilisation, and to consider how crucial our collections can be for understanding these people from the past. Today, by dint of our colonial

past, a fascination for the ancient Egyptians pertains, evidenced by the extensive Egyptian collections which are housed by many of the major museums around the world³. Beginning in the late eighteenth century during the French invasion of Egypt, France became one of the first countries to show an interest in archaeological evidence - 'Ancient Egypt was quite literally rediscovered like an unexplored continent' (Clayton,1982:frontispiece). However, these Napoleonic scholars were not content with studying the ancient sites and monuments in situ, they began to seize hoards of antiquities which were duly sent to Paris.

With both the dissemination of publications such as Denon's, *Description de L'Egypte* (1809), and the subsequent British involvement there, tourism and tomb raiding became fashionable, with vast numbers of objects plundered from burial sites (Clayton,1982:27). The reasons why such a rich variety of jewellery, ceramic bowls, jars and chalices, combs, mirrors, make-up and even model slaves or shabti were available are twofold: first, because they were the usual accoutrements of mummies in the afterlife; and second, because ancient Egyptian burials were sited in dry, sandy places, these objects survived largely well-preserved. The Egyptologists, Sue D'Auria, Peter Lacovara and Catharine Roehrig, endorse this: 'Due to accidents of preservation and the preferences of early archaeologists and collectors, much of the surviving material culture of ancient Egypt is of a funerary nature' (1988:11).

Given that colonial involvement and tourism provided the means, why did so many individuals and museums collect these ancient artefacts? Taking a speculative view, perhaps their cultural distinctiveness engendered a genuine curiosity to find out about ancient Egyptian life; its religious practices and beliefs; its sophisticated technological and architectural achievements, and its unique artistic craftsmanship and style. Or perhaps, because the mystery⁴ which shrouded these ancient objects created a sense of wonder drawing people back into human history? Or even because the ancient Egyptians were perceived to be culturally different/'other'⁵. Whatever the reason/s, D'Auria, Lacovara and Roehrig observe: 'Many misconceptions have arisen about ancient Egypt and its funerary practices. These have been fuelled by the

media's creation of the "mummy's curse," by innumerable horror movies, and by wild imagination' (1988:11).

From an academic perspective, collections of objects from this era can help to initiate research into numerous areas of ancient Egyptian life. For example, Manchester University have recently made significant progress in researching the pathology of mummies and, by using modern sophisticated medical technology, now have data about ancient Egyptian diets, illnesses, dentistry, magic and medicine. Rosalie David, the paleopathologist in charge of this research comments:

In the early 1970s, Egyptology was a discipline still closely tied to its 19th-century roots in archaeology and anthropology. Now, as a new century dawns, it is an enterprise that ranges from excavating ancient sites to analysing the DNA of ancient bones. Unquestionably, the most exciting new area of study is the field of paleopathology, which has brought the most sophisticated techniques of medical and biological science to bear on the study of ancient Egyptian mummies (David and Archbold, 2000:10).

While archaeologists eagerly piece together this type of information from objects and mummified specimens, historians and art historians focus on objects from a different perspective. Their project uses objects as evidence of people, events, life-styles, art and cultural trends; and, with vast amounts of artefacts including sculpture, wall paintings, reliefs, hieroglyphs and papyri, in addition to general objects of use and veneration, there is a wealth of material to study. Documents from ancient Greek and Roman writers also enable scholars to move towards a greater understanding of the ancient Egyptians⁶. To learn about a civilisation other than our own helps us grasp the concepts of change and continuity, causes and consequences, similarities and difference, and ultimately gain a sense of personal identity by contrasting ourselves with the lives of 'others'⁷. A collection which has been used to help children and adults in this way for over a hundred years is the Myers collection of ancient Egyptian art.

1.2. Ancient Egyptian Objects at The Myers Museum - A Brief History:

The Myers Museum houses a varied collection of Egyptian antiquity numbering about 2,500 pieces, and is sited at Eton College, the well-known public school. Originally this collection was owned by an old Etonian, Major William Joseph Myers, who bequeathed it to the College in 1899 shortly before his death at the Battle of Ladysmith during the Boer War. Prior to 1894 he had enjoyed a

distinguished military career in the 7th Batt. Kings Royal Rifle Corps, seeing action in many military engagements including the Zulu War (1879), and the Egyptian Campaign (1882-86). However, from accounts in his diaries, his first visit to Egypt with its ancient sites and distinctive culture, held a perpetual fascination for him. So much so, over the succeeding seventeen years he accumulated a wide-ranging collection of ancient objects representative of a large span of ancient Egyptian history, and in some cases, exquisite specimens in their own right.

1.3 The Centenary Exhibition⁸:

'The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College' 1999 -2000:

In accordance with Major Myers' wishes, this Egyptian collection has been used sporadically as a teaching resource; and, since the opening of the Myers Museum in the 1980s, it has been available to the visiting public on a seasonal basis. Though it is well-known as a valuable collection in the academic world of Egyptology, its worth has only recently been recognized by the College. Part of this recognition involved mounting a centenary exhibition in 1999, with the aim of drawing the wider public's attention to the æsthetic, cultural and historical significance of the collection. Furthermore, because a fundamental aspect of this strategy was an offer of loaning the exhibition to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, both institutions collaborated on the catalogue (Spurr, Reeves, Quirke, 1999: Foreword). Accordingly, the Eton exhibition ran from September 1999 - June 2000, and was followed up in New York from September 2000 - January 2001.

The Myers Collection is normally displayed in one very cramped room within the College's Brewhouse Gallery; however, to accommodate the exhibition the space was expanded to include three rooms which were put at the disposal of the curator and Egyptologist. In terms of organization, the ground floor displayed four of its larger pieces, namely: a decorative mummy case (ref. fig. 5.2); two gilded pharaonic mummy masks (ref. fig. 5.4); and a fragment (the feet) of a pink granite statue of the Pharaoh, Rameses II (ref. fig. 5.3)⁹. While the larger of the two rooms on the first floor housed three double-sided vitrines (H. 2 metres x W. 4 metres), displaying a traditional chronological array of artefacts;

the smaller, adjoining room housed four small (H 1.75 metres x W. 2 metres) and one large vitrine (H.2 metres x W.4 metres) showing a comprehensive selection of funerary objects. Also on view were: three copies of Major Myers' thirty-six diaries which related to his time in Egypt; the telegram announcing his death; a selection of letters of condolence; letters which traced the history of the collection's bequest; and a nineteenth century military tunic from Major Myer's regiment.

My own association with the exhibition began in 1998 when I was appointed as a curatorial assistant. In this post I performed a variety of functions including: researching the life of Major Myers; liaising with the Metropolitan Museum in New York over the catalogue, loan and reproduction/merchandising agreements; discussing the exhibition design with an architect, builders and craftsmen; commissioning a selection of postcards; ordering merchandise for the museum shop; and initiating a publicity campaign with both local and national newspapers, educational and specialist archaeological journals, and television companies. Once the exhibition was opened I became responsible for its day to day organization which also entailed giving short talks to the general public, and running an educational programme for primary school children.

1.4 The Exhibition's Educational Programme:

Early in the planning stage of the exhibition I recognized there was educational potential for primary school children who study ancient Egypt as part of the history and art syllabi at Key Stage 2 of The National Curriculum. So in June 1999 I formulated a pilot programme and invited a local school to participate. Spurred on by positive feedback, I contacted Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, Bracknell and Wokingham education authorities, in addition to a number of independent schools in the area. In the event, almost 2000 primary school children visited the exhibition. As it was my aim to enable these children to have as rich an experience as possible, I undertook an outreach scheme with all the schools prior to their museum visit¹⁰. During these sessions the children were introduced to objects (ref. figs. 4.1,4.2,4.3) through slides and jigsaws (ref. figs. 4.4 - 4.11), with the express purpose of helping them understand about ancientness, ancient Egypt and archaeological finds. The process of fitting their

jigsaw pieces together was then not only appreciated as a simulation of archaeological practice, but as a metaphor for learning from the exhibition itself¹¹. Later, when the children visited the museum, they participated in an observational drawing activity, a treasure hunt and a handling session with authentic ancient Egyptian objects¹², each lasting twenty to twenty-five minutes. Next I focus on the space and building of the Myers Museum.

1.5 Experiencing the Context of the Museum:

Living space is the feeling of the positioning of things in the environment, liberty of movement, and the appeal of paths as directives. Taking possession of space is our first gesture as infants, and sensitivity to the position of other things is a prerequisite of life. As Kant noted, space infiltrates through all our senses. Our perceptual systems are always being determined by space (Martin,1981:89).

In this quotation Martin(1981), makes the point that spaces/physical contexts are not only essential for our existence, but also for defining it. Thus, as objects are co-constituted by the space they inhabit, so the space draws its identity from its inhabitants. As Noël Arnaud(1950) reminds us, 'I am the space where I am' (Arnaud, in Bachelard,1994:137). Being therefore, is implicitly being somewhere. Consequently, when considering the children's experiences with ancient objects within the museum, it is important to study the contribution which the architecture makes to their sense of embodiment.

An academic paper which draws attention to the fact that a sense of place is often taken-for-granted in terms of at-homeness, environmental experience and behaviour is David Seamon's, *Phenomenology of Lifeworld and Place* (2002). Here, the ways in which we relate to the world and gain a sense of spatial identity are discussed with reference to the work of Buttmer (1980), and Relph (1976). Focusing specifically on how the phenomena of 'outsideness' and 'insideness' create positions and perceptions, Buttmer suggests adopting a reflexive attitude to gain a greater understanding of how space is structured and experienced (1980:170). Relph, on the other hand, who was strongly influenced by Merleau-Ponty, promotes the ideas of 'body ballets' and 'time-space routines' as spatial behaviours within a continuum of various modes of place experience (Relph, in Seamon,2002:2-3). More particularly, the degree to which one feels inside a place - in terms of being 'here' rather than 'there', enclosed rather

than exposed, secure rather than threatened, will affect the way one feels and moves within different spaces (Seamon,2002:1-2). For the geographer, town planner and architect, not to mention the public, these issues are crucial, as Relph says:

One can speak of varying degrees of insideness: for example, existential insideness, the deepest experience of place and involving an unself-conscious immersion in place; or empathetic insideness, a situation where a person who is an outsider in terms of place works through concern, interest, and empathy to understand that place and comes to know its essential meaning and structure. On the other hand, one can feel outside place: for example, existential outsideness, a sense of alienation and homelessness; or objective outsideness, the intentional separating of person from place in order to study it selectively in terms of one particular attribute of activity... [This] continuum sensitizes researchers to different modes of place experience, helping them to realize that the same place may foster considerably different modes of insideness and outsideness for different individuals and groups (Relph, in Seamon,2002:2).

Buttimer (1970), endorses this claiming that only an empathetic insider can help to bring about understanding between those who plan and those who live in places. By drawing attention to the fact that everyone who encounters a museum environment will experience it differently, Buttimer's text serves as a reminder that, although the Myers Museum was familiar to me, it was wholly unfamiliar to every child who visited it.

An architect who has explored the myriad ways in which buildings have the potential to nurture or damage our health, is Christopher Day (1990). In *Places of the Soul*, he discusses natural light, noise, temperature, ventilation, pollution, colour, texture, spatial dimensions, scale and design, and the individual and collective impact these factors can have on our well-being. Day's text raised my awareness of the way in which contextual factors could influence the children's experienced as a whole. He explains:

Children behave differently in different environments. Even mature adults feel, think and act differently in different surroundings (Day,1990:7).

Our environment is our biography - the stream of events and surroundings which make us what we are ... [it] can provide nourishment, support and balance for the human spirit as much as it can starve, oppress and pervert it (Day,1990:23).

To demonstrate this I deal with each one of these factors in turn. According to Day (1990), we spend on average seventy-five percent of our lives either in buildings or vehicles, (1990:38), so we should be aware that the amount and quality of natural light can affect our moods and inhibit visual perception

(1990:12,34,48-49). Two rooms in the museum had no natural light at all and one room was lit very subtly as a deliberate ploy to recreate the atmosphere of an ancient Egyptian tomb. It will be interesting therefore, to discover how the children experienced these darkened spaces.

Day (1990), points out that the nature and quantity of noise can also be consequential; for, while total silence can be life-threatening, excessive noise can be harmful and disturbing (1990:138-40). Moreover, if certain levels of noise are essential for location and self-recognition, too high a level can cause confusion, distraction and disorientation. When the logistics of the exhibition were discussed, it was decided that because the museum was small, school visits should take place during the morning and only one class of children could be accommodated at a time¹³. To cater for the three activities therefore, all three floors were used; as a result there was never a great deal of noise. There was, however, extraneous noise from the dehumidifiers, and in summer a swishing noise from the fans.

Temperature and air conditions can also be crucial for the way that contexts are experienced. For example, if museums or galleries are too hot, cold, stuffy, draughty or smell unpleasant their effects can be felt very dramatically (Day, 1990:49). Throughout the winter months of the exhibition the museum was kept at an even temperature which was mutually acceptable for both people and artefacts. However, in the summer fans had to be used continuously to improve air movement as no windows could be opened.

Another factor considered by Day (1990), was texture created by materials (114-115,142). Throughout the children's visits texture was experienced or perceived in a multi-sensory way. It was important therefore to be aware of the ways in which the children responded through their tactile, haptic and kinæsthetic senses (1990:49). For example: the smoothness of the glass cases, the wooden parquet flooring, the crinkly stickiness of the plastic gloves¹⁴ used for handling, and the leather and plastic seats which the children sat on during these sessions were all part of their experience.

Colour, scale and design can have their varied effects too. For instance, colours

can evoke calming or excited responses; however, research has discovered that colour contrasts are more influential than the perception of individual hues (Day,1990:47-48). Most of the museum was painted in a matt, charcoal grey and, while this provided a dramatic contrast for the objects in the cases, it could have been perceived as somewhat sombre.

Day (1990), also tells us that scale is yet another factor which can provoke distinctive responses. Spaces which are perceived as too high, too broad or too long and out of proportion to the human frame can prevent us from making a relationship with them and we may feel lost or remote (1990:22,72-75). Alternatively, spaces which are perceived as too small or lack any sense of focus, can be felt as equally uncomfortable (1990:74). Though the spaces in the museum are moderately sized without lofty ceilings and relate very comfortably to an adult human frame, it remains to be seen how children will respond to them.

In terms of building design, Day (1990), tells us that while curves can be life-enhancing(1990:64), too much linearity breeds tension (1990:61,83). The museum which houses the exhibition was built during the Georgian period and is somewhat linear, but not sharply cornered like many modern buildings. The display-cases however, are rectilinear, but are not great in number.

Day's (1990), text details how the physical aspects of every environment contribute to an experience of place, enabling me to understand the myriad ways in which children may encounter the interior phenomenological space of the museum.

1.6 A Contextual Model:

Two scholars, John Falk and Lynn Dierking(1992,1997), have researched how museum and gallery contexts can influence experience and learning. Using a contextual model, they describe the physical, social/cultural and personal dimensions of a museum experience and demonstrate how they interact. Once these dimensions are isolated and understood, improvements can be made to the visiting and learning experience, thereby making it more satisfying and educationally fulfilling. They contend:

Museums have the ability to present reality; simply, dramatically and more than anything, authentically. The essence of the museum experience is the ability for an individual to see real things, and under the best of circumstances, within real and meaningful physical contexts ... When people are asked to recall their museum experiences, whether a day or two years later or after 20 or 30 years, the most frequently and persistent aspects relate to the physical context: memories of what an individual saw, what they did and how they felt about those experiences (Falk and Dierking,1997:12-13,14).

Thus, when applying this model to the Myers Museum one can see that the personal context would embrace the children's characteristics - their knowledge, interests, attitudes, values and experience; the social/cultural context would involve their class-mates, teachers, parent helpers within the cultural practice of viewing ancient artefacts; and the physical context would include the physical features of the museum including its collection, location, design and ambience (Falk and Dierking,1997:13).

Although my study focuses on the way in which all these contexts impinge upon the children's experience, Falk and Dierking's (1997), reasons for claiming that the physical context is crucial for 'quality learning experiences' requires further explanation:

Quality educational programmes frame the learner's experiences within richly described, relevant and appropriately complex environments. Successful educators appreciate that time spent on creating an appropriate setting is not a waste of time or money, but essential ... quality learning environments help the learner navigate from one experience to another, in other words, within an appropriate learning context, the setting itself helps to direct the learning ... all of an individual's sensory channels become engaged in the experience ... such experiences provide a sharper focus and are more memorable ... [and] enable people to continue, or extend their learning beyond the temporal and physical confines of a single experience (Falk and Dierking,1997:13).

Though Falk and Dierking's (1992,1997), theory demonstrates how influential physical factors are in creating meaningful museum experiences, it also suggests that it can be applied to other quasi social/contextual encounters.

1.7 Contextual Factors and Visitors' Needs:

The influence of contextual factors on visiting and learning is also explored by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1994), in *Museums and their Visitors*. Taking a thorough and practical approach, she discusses welcoming and responding to visitors' needs; language and text; and communication and the necessity to evaluate and research. As museums are recognized as a valued part of the

leisure industry relying on public support and government DCMS and DfES for their survival, it is vital to consider all the factors which impinge upon museum visits (1994:30-31)¹⁵. Writing about the total experience of visiting museums and galleries, Hooper-Greenhill comments:

The total experience includes the exhibitions and activities, and also the shop, whether there is food and drink, the cleanliness of the toilets, the friendliness of the staff and most importantly ... to a large extent how easy it is to manage, in practical terms, on an intellectual level and socially (Hooper- Greenhill,1994:88-89).

As in Falk and Dierking(1992), Hooper-Greenhill (1994), maintains that the traditional functions of a museum/gallery, namely - collecting, conserving, displaying and educating, need to be reevaluated to accommodate more consumerist and discriminating audiences. She also argues that education and communication should be heightened in status as the channels through which museum and gallery culture is disseminated. To be effective, audiences' needs should be researched and accommodated. Consequently, the museum building and everything which pertains to the visiting experience is vitally significant, requiring collaborations across all domains of museum practices. According to Hooper-Greenhill, the days when curators could work autonomously on exhibitions without consideration for the consuming public are over.

As the Myers Museum was a small private institution with three part-time staff, curatorial and educational interests were discussed regularly and mutual support pertained throughout the period of the exhibition. In addition, when no in-house expertise was available, specialists were consulted to offer advice: for example, on two occasions a museum architect was consulted to assist in solving logistical problems; and, to meet the physical needs of both adults and children, cloakroom, toilet and merchandising facilities were made easily accessible.

1.8 The Subtle Effects of Contexts:

While contexts can have far-reaching effects on our physical and social behaviour, they can also affect us in more imperceptible ways. In *Civilising Rituals, Inside Public Art Museums*, Carol Duncan (1995), reveals that nowadays museums and art galleries tend to be regarded as places which inspire awe, reverence and rituals, and where values, ideas and social identities are confirmed or disputed.

Using a variety of texts ranging from art history, anthropology, museology and philosophy, Duncan (1995), attempts to unravel the complexity of the museum context. In the process she likens the museum to a theatre, where the galleries are the stage, the visitors both actors and audience, and the objects the props. As the plot of the play unfolds visitors come on and off the stage entering from left and right, performing various rituals - some bowing to the objects, some looking in surprised disbelief, some treading very softly under the eye of a watchful warder, or perhaps discussing a work with a friend (1995:12-13)¹⁶.

However, though the rituals of visiting intrigue Duncan (1995), what she finds most fascinating is museum and gallery architecture, which demarcates the space as distinctively *other* than the ordinary spaces inhabited on a day to day basis. Public architecture, especially neoclassical in style, can set the tone conjuring up images of cathedrals, temples or churches which in turn can inculcate a spirit of reverence, respect, sobriety and authority(1995:7,11). In terms of the Myers Museum, though built during the eighteenth century as the College brewhouse, subsequently used as a boys' boarding house, and then converted to a gallery/museum, it does not have a grandiose façade. Notwithstanding, it is set at the heart of this well-known public school which has a range of eclectic architectural styles ranging from the fifteenth century to the present day giving it a distinctive historical character. Furthermore, it is populated by twelve hundred boys who all wear a particularly outmoded uniform. Consequently it can easily be experienced as a place set apart, different from many of the public sites which are regularly frequented by most adults and children. The interior of the museum, though small houses objects which, because of their great age, rarity and quality, confer a self-consciously elitist and 'aesthetic' ambience, which accordingly contributes to what Bourdieu (1979), describes as 'habitus'¹⁷.

The Myers Museum is also a donor museum evidenced by Major Myers' personal effects, paying tribute to his memory and his bequest. This in itself confers a biographical narrative on the building which can be influential in connecting visitors to a human story and an understanding of the objects' provenance. If people can identify with Major Myers the man, the soldier and collector,

perhaps they might also realize that his collection and the exhibition stand in a metonymical way, as testimony of his death, giving the museum a feel of the mausoleum. Overall, there is a traditional feel about this exhibition due to the great age of the objects, the rigidly chronological nature of the displays, and the institutional ethos of the College which is steeped in practices which have remained the same over the centuries. I would speculate therefore, that this combination of factors may well contribute to the museum being experienced as *other*; as Duncan (1995), says, conferring a set of values, expecting a type of behaviour, and enthroning or enslaving its objects in spaces of 'æsthetic' distinction (1995:72).

Whether the children in my study will intuit these ideological notions has a great deal to do with not only the physical character of the museum context, but the preparation they receive during their school lessons and to a lesser extent their outreach session. While the physical space of a museum can often be taken for granted, every museum experience encapsulates art, society, ideas and meanings bonded to a place. Notwithstanding, the children's museum experience and the meanings they make will be influenced in no small part by their teachers and the social interaction with their peers. It is for this reason that I now turn to the social aspects of their encounter.

2. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT:

In unfamiliar places, we perceive even more clearly how action and person-determined a child's sense of space is ...

Little children's worlds are adult-care-dependent - certainly social worlds (Barrett and Beekman 1983:40,42).

These brief quotations alert us to the fact that children's spatial experiences are both socially constructed and to a large extent dependent on adults. Using Falk and Dierking's (1992), model as a guide, I want to investigate the social dimension of the museum context, by focusing on the ways in which the children interacted with one another and with me as I carried out my pedagogical and research roles.

In the process of examining the nature of this pedagogical relationship, I reflect on my own practice with honesty and candour, and draw on a number of

theories which take sensitive praxis as their subject. Initially, I briefly describe what the children and I did together, and then discuss how this social interaction contributed to their contextual experience.

2.1 Greeting, Meeting and Making Connections:

Prior to the children's museum visit, I spent approximately an hour with every class in an outreach session, as a way of getting to know the children on their 'home' ground, through dialogue and activity work. Later, when the children arrived at the museum, I welcomed them to the exhibition, briefed them about their activities, and assigned an adult helper to accompany each group throughout their museum journey.

As I directed the handling session myself¹⁸, I asked the teachers to supervise the children during the treasure hunt and observational drawing session. This gave me a chance to use the objects to their maximum potential and more importantly, talk to every child in turn as the groups were rotated. At the end of the visit they bought mementos from the shop, before rejoining their coach.

2.2 The Influence of Phenomenological Pedagogy:

The texts discussed here are not only representative of phenomenological pedagogy, but demonstrate how influential they have been for my teaching practice. After relocating from Hampstead to Windsor in 1998, I resigned from the teaching post I had held for ten years. At this point, whilst I undertook a short spell of supply teaching in a nursery class (ages 3-5), I was introduced to van Manen's books on pedagogy, phenomenology and research. These two experiences were seminal in the way they helped me to rethink my philosophy of teaching and view of the child. The following sections demonstrate how these ideas have affected my pedagogy, relationships with children, and influenced the social context of children visiting the Egyptian objects in the Myers museum.

2.3 Valuing the Child - Creating Relations:

Fundamental to any fulfilling teaching and learning experience is what van Manen (1991), calls 'the pedagogical relationship'. In *The Tact of Teaching*, he tells us that the foundation of this relationship is created from humanistic

principles which seek to protect, direct and orient the child. Furthermore, stemming from this come mutual respect, regard, trust and gratitude coupled with a desire to help the child develop as an independent, caring member of society. However, because young children are so vulnerable and so inexperienced a great deal of help is required (1991:38). A number of educational theorists who acknowledge the vulnerability of children and suggest ways in which teachers can respond in a sensitive, supportive and protective manner are Otto Bollnow (1989), Kate Meyer-Drawe (1986), and Wilfried Lippitz (1986).

Bollnow's (1989) article not only considers the pedagogical atmosphere in general, but explores it from the perspectives of both educator and child. In the first section he lists the necessary prerequisites for education and childrearing: 'These are trust in the teacher, obligation and obedience, love and honour, and many others which make possible not only the ability to care for children, but also the readiness of the child to be cared for' (1989:6). However, he is quick to point out that while some of these qualities are emotional in character, they should not be cultivated in a sentimental way. Consequently, for children to feel safe and secure they need to grow in a relationship which prepares them equally for the joys, cares and burdens of the future (1989:10).

Bollnow (1989), also gives a descriptive account of children as they start school, explaining how crucial the transfer of trust from parent to teacher is at this stage. In this way the completeness of the parent is diminished and the seeds for future relationships are sown (1989:14). Reiterating the emphasis on safety and security, he also advocates that teachers should respond positively to the joy, cheerfulness and 'morning-ness'¹⁹ of the child (1989:17-19). This ideally encourages the child to be forward looking, expectant and open to a sense of magic. Gratitude and obedience, love and adoration are further explained as natural to a child's thankfulness, complicit compliance, trust and awe (1989:28).

The final section, on the perspective of the educator, again stresses the reciprocity of the pedagogical relation; here Bollnow (1989), makes the point that while educators expect the child to grow and develop, they too should expect

to change in response (1989:39). However, because the child does not have the same inner strength as an adult, educators should be critically aware of their power to inculcate beliefs, attitudes and values in the minds of their pupils (1989:33). Moreover, they should cultivate the pedagogical virtues of equational love, patience, hope, serenity, humour and goodness (1989:45-63).

While this text is somewhat idealistic, subjective and limiting with regard to pedagogical virtues, it has considerable relevance for my own understanding of the human and educational needs of primary school children. After reading it I soon began to appreciate how disorienting the Myers Museum might feel to a child who had stepped inside for the first time; moreover, it made me consider how a sensitive teacher with good pedagogical insight could help create a context which was not only stimulating and exciting, but one which allowed every child to feel welcome, comfortable and self-assured.

Meyer-Drawe (1986), also takes a phenomenological approach to the child, and recommends that by being open to a kaleidoscope of experiences educators will find themselves capable of being 'surprised by children'. Children's 'expressive world wears a magic prior to the distinction between potentiality and reality'(1986: 49). Adults, she claims, have forgotten what it is like to experience this magic, and expect children's reactions to match their own expectations. She reinforces this by citing Merleau-Ponty:

Do we have the right to comprehend the time, the space of the child as an indifferentiation of *our* time, of *our* space? ... This is to reduce the child's experience to our own, at the very moment one is trying to respect the phenomena (Merleau-Ponty in Meyer-Drawe,1986:50).

Here Meyer-Drawe suggests that precisely because we are unaware of the nature of children's worlds we should be prepared to learn from it and cherish the magic which it speaks. It is important therefore to try to find the, 'tissue of the world which links the experiences of both children and adults' (1986:53).

Meyer-Drawe's (1986), essay makes a plea for taking children seriously and listening attentively to what they say. Because it has direct relevance for the social interactions which took place in the museum as the children experienced the ancient objects, I will need to pay particular attention to their thoughts, gestures and *awe-ful* silences as a way of tuning in to their world.

Lippitz (1986), who supports Meyer-Drawe's (1986), viewpoint cites Beekman who argues that if we continually try to understand what children do by comparing them with adult models, we throw away the chance of ever grasping the uniqueness of their worlds. Although the viability of working with our own remembered childhood is considered, Lippitz rejects it as unreliable because we are constantly evolving and being recreated in a continual fusion of the past and the present through successions of understandings. Fundamentally, unless we connect to the present world through our senses, by re-experiencing the places, objects, and people which have concrete links with the past, our memories cannot be stimulated. In effect, this means that our remembering is embedded in both our present and past experience, making the process open and coterminous with our current existence²⁰.

Again quoting Beekman, Lippitz says, 'the child's landscape is more immediate and more exciting - full of colours and changes which I, as an adult, don't notice' (Beekman, in Lippitz, 1986:61). To achieve this he recommends that adults should divest themselves of their values, prejudices and preconceptions and allow themselves to be drawn into the world of the child, to be both child and adult synonymously. Children and researchers need to enter into a reciprocal relationship where both allow the other to enter their world and share their secrets. 'The closeness of them which they allow us, the participation in their life, makes our understanding possible' (Lippitz, 1986:64).

As I fulfilled my roles of teacher and researcher in the museum, thereby creating a symbiotic relationship with the children, I recognized that if I was to move towards an understanding of their experiences as an adult, I would need to acknowledge/bracket my prejudices, values and preconceptions.

2.4 Meeting Minds:

As the children worked with the objects in the Myers Museum through looking, drawing, searching and touching, they began to question and listen to one another and to their teachers²¹. To understand this uniquely dialogic process, I found the phenomenological ideas of Cynthia Taylor (1984), and van Manen (1991), helpful. These two scholars maintain that when teachers and children

work together, they not only make sense of the world in which they live through a rich symbiotic relationship, but this in turn provides the social framework for future human development.

While Taylor's (1984), article, 'On the way to teaching as letting learn', describes her experiences of teaching art history to a group of uninterested undergraduates, it also has relevance for much younger students. In fact, it was only through the difficulties of this teaching situation that the wonder of owning knowledge was revealed to Taylor. Quoting Heidegger we hear that, 'To learn means to become knowing ... to put oneself on a journey, to experience, means to learn' (Heidegger, in Taylor,1984:351). This knowing is not merely a passing on of facts though, but a way of helping the teacher learn how to help the child/student come to a knowing experience. However, 'teaching is even more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn' (Heidegger, in Taylor,1984:352). Questioning is a fundamental part of this experience which often precipitates the lonely condition of self-reflection. This condition can only be brought about if the child/student takes responsibility for his/her own learning. According to Taylor, once we come to look at ourselves, acknowledge what we believe, what we value, what we feel, what we think, what we know and don't know, then we start to know what knowing is.

By encouraging her students to write about their experience with new works of art, Taylor (1984), was able to make her classes much more personal and meaningful(1984:353-354). In addition, as she began to assume a more reticent role, her students made more vocal contribution to their classes; this very often meant that she had to learn to become a better listener and speak through silence. As she says, 'the teacher must provide private space, psychic and physical space in which the student can be alone listening to inner silence ... most important of all, perhaps, is the teacher's own openness to learning and knowing, a continual and vital process of growth. One must let oneself learn'(Taylor,1984:354).

A similar approach to teaching is taken by van Manen (1991), where the

teacher is prepared to learn as much about himself/herself within the teaching encounter as he/she learns about the child. This approach is fundamentally based on listening. It is only through concentrated listening and empathy that we come to know the child before us; as van Manen explains, 'when children call us they call upon us'(van Manen,1991:24).

Learning to adopt this approach of 'pedagogical thoughtfulness'(a term coined by van Manen), can be inspirational but also challenging and salutary, because it helps the teacher position himself/herself in a new relationship to the child. This relationship is henceforth concerned with viewing and valuing the child holistically as 'someone in the process of becoming' (van Manen,1991:1). Supporting the child through its development and with its welfare in mind means that the teacher has to act in *loco parentis*. This does not mean acceding to a child's every whim and allowing him/her to dominate, but it does mean asking oneself what experiences are like for the child and trying to understand. Acting with 'pedagogical tact' not only builds up a trusting rapport between teacher and child, but enables a sense of mutual respect to blossom (1991:5).

Listening to the child relate its stories, or explain, or just talk is not something we do solely with our ears. We can also listen with our eyes, through silence, through gestures and through atmosphere. Being alive to a child's disclosures as he/she communicates is vital if we are to act effectively and with the child's best interests at heart (van Manen,1991:86-88).

As each child experienced the objects during the outreach session and their museum visit I encouraged them to talk to one another and to me. In particular, the handling session gave me a chance of listening to their thoughts, ideas and feelings as they spoke freely about the objects in their grasp.

Both Taylor's (1984), and van Manen's (1991), texts have proved enlightening, making me more mindful of the children in my care, and through self-reflection, making me re-evaluate my own pedagogical contribution to the social dimension of the children's contextual experience.

2.5 Ancient Egypt, Primary History and the National Curriculum:

Though aware that my research embraced the children's experience as a whole, as a teacher aiming to help them gain an understanding of the ancient Egyptians, I needed to have some background knowledge of primary history to perform my duties conscientiously. To this end I consulted texts by Hilary Cooper (1995); Jon Nichol and John Fines (1997); and Lucy and Mark O'Hara (2001).

These scholars, who address the recommendations of the National Curriculum²², suggest that by being part of history children have a relationship with the people and the past which, as they learn to question it, can help them develop their educational skills and gain a sense of cultural and personal identity. Hilary Cooper (1995), explains:

History is concerned with abstract ideas, the causes of effects of changes over time and the behaviour of adults, and involves understanding that the past is constantly reinterpreted, by making inferences about incomplete sources. Yet the past is a dimension of children's social and physical environment and they interact with it from birth. They hear and use the vocabulary of time and change, old new, yesterday, tomorrow ... ask questions about the sequence and causes of events: when did we move here? why? ... encounter different interpretations of past times in nursery rhymes and fairy tales ... encounter historical sources: old photographs, a baby book, a statue ... ask questions: who is in the photograph? ... History then, is not just appropriate for young children; it is essential (Cooper,1995:1-3).

Writing about the teaching of history, Nichol and Fines (1997), say: in that history is about asking and answering questions, children should be continually challenged to speculate, make connections, debate issues, understand and gain access to the people of the past from well-chosen, *authentic* sources. Furthermore, by studying these sources in depth through a range of varied activities and teaching approaches, they should be able to expand their historical knowledge (1997:viii,ix).

Commenting on the wider implications of studying history, O'Hara and O'Hara (2001), declare:

History is an indispensable contributor to the the attitudes, values and feelings that permeate society. History provides a wonderful opportunity to address wider educational aims associated with personal and social development ... education is concerned with motivating, enabling, enskilling and empowering children. History, as a study of the past, can make a unique contribution to this and can have great personal relevance for children (O'Hara and O'Hara,2001:14-15).

While these scholars commend the learning of history, a great deal of contemporary research has focused on how children understand, construct meanings and negotiate the past. However, although Hooper-Greenhill (2000), tells us how meanings can be created from objects of the past, allowing us an insight into the lives of those people who used them; Husbands and Pendry (2000), argue that this understanding is largely inaccessible to children as it is constructed from the mind-set of adults from widely differing cultures. They say:

As with texts, so with objects. Along with written representations which use words and sometimes images, the production of 'others' through displays of objects also conveys attitudes and values, perhaps even more powerfully. But those 'others' also used objects in their own powerful ways ... the meanings of objects are constructed according to the perspectives from which they are viewed and in relation to the discourses within which they are placed (Hooper-Greenhill,2000:86,76).

These worlds are different from the personal and emotional worlds of the past *both* because people in the past thought differently from us, and also because the pupils are children asked to get to grips with the mind-set of adults. There is a tendency here, and for all pupils, to back-project modern family, domestic and emotional relationships on to the past. This comes out in some of the obvious anachronisms, but also in the attempt to make sense of the past at more than an informational level. In this sense they are working against the grain of historical thinking: they grasp a sense of 'what' happened but not of the different mind-set that shaped what people think (Husbands and Pendry, in Arthur and Phillips,2000:129).

I want to argue that, even though ancient civilizations bequeathed little or no textual evidence, they force adult and child historians to deduce meanings from a critical assessment of objects as evidence²³. This assessment can derive validity not only from the commonalities which we recognize from our own lived experience, but from the rational, imaginative and empathetic elements which contribute to our interpretations²⁴. These interpretations will thus be a mediation of our own cultural and historical traditions, which emanate from our understanding of the past manipulated in part by the cultural institutions housing objects which range from antiquity to the most recent past (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990a, 1992; Buren, in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996)²⁵. Walsh (1992), endorses this:

Today's historian is more likely to be sceptical about the possibility of value-free history. In particular, the overall organization or perspective of a work is now commonly seen as influenced (at least) by factors which the historian has brought to her enquiry from outside history... the sheer bulk and diversity of the materials of history guarantee an endless supply of perspectives in the first sense (Walsh,1992:42).

The particularity of perspectives and the way they influence historical interpretations is borne out by Nichol and Fines (1997), who make Jack Hexter's (1972), theory of the 'first and second record' clearer. They explain:

The 'first record' covers both the raw material of history, the original, first-hand sources, and the later interpretations. We bring to bear upon the 'first record' our wealth of experience, what Hexter defines as 'the second record'. The 'second record' is individual to each of us. Much of it is wholly personal and private, hidden away from public view until we choose to reveal it. It contains knowledge, expertise, judgements, interests, intuitions and values nurtured through many years ... Hexter argues that in historical thinking you use your 'second record' to create history from the 'first record' (Nichol and Fines,1997:2).

When children understand how they draw upon their own values, knowledge, experience and judgments as they interpret historical evidence, it is easier for them to see how the writing of histories is always particular, partial and never value free.

2.6 Four Approaches to Learning in the Museum:

In the previous two sections I have argued that sensitive teaching and the use of authentic objects as historical evidence can bring about a strong sense of relation which has the seeds of social, as well as intellectual, growth embedded within in it. It is also important to consider the uniqueness of each relationship as it contributes to both the learning which takes place, and the overarching social context. George Hein (1995,1998), shows how the museum context can promote learning which is meaningful by being unique. Because beliefs about education and epistemology are crucial for pedagogy, they are also important for the strategies museums use in structuring visitors' experiences. By way of discussion therefore, Hein cites several learning theories propounded by well-known educationalists, and applies them to museum learning.

Accordingly Hein (1995), contrasts two opposing viewpoints about knowledge (what is known), and learning (the process of acquiring knowledge); and asks, does knowledge exist per se, independent of the knower as Plato argued in his theory of ideal forms in, *The Republic* (c.380 BC), or, does it exist only in the mind of the knower according to Berkeley's, *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710)? Furthermore, does learning happen cumulatively as Locke suggests in his, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where facts are built up from an initial base of ignorance like bricks; or from the organisation of

selected sensations as Piaget's developmental theory describes (Piaget in Hein, 1995:21)^{26?}

Applying his own theory to museum contexts Hein describes four possible ways of learning. First, through induction, where systematised and classified information is passed on to children by filling them up with new facts (1995: 21). Second, through the so-called discovery approach, where the teacher prescribes and structures the children's experiences with a view to acquiring knowledge of previously chosen facts and concepts. Third, through the constructivist approach, where every child is given opportunities to formulate their own unique knowledge and learning (Hein,1995:22;1998:155). And finally, through the behaviourist approach, whereby knowledge is accumulated by each child, even though it need not have any significance or relevance for the child (1995:22).

Hein (1995), links all these positions to four equivalent types of museums namely: the systematic museum, the discovery museum, the constructivist museum and the orderly museum. In both the systematic and the orderly museum the subject matter is laid out to represent a 'true' account of the facts in a way which promotes an incremental or progressively structured approach to learning. The discovery museum on the other hand, while it encourages an active, investigative approach, still prescribes a specific route to the formation of concepts. Learning is therefore practical but programmed (Hein,1995:22).

A constructivist museum however, is far less prescriptive in its strategies of display, and invites visitors to make their own meanings as the exhibits are experienced. Consequently, there is no set order for viewing nor suggested meanings or interpretations, and comparisons and connections are openly encouraged. The learner is therefore free to construct his/her experience throughout his/her museum visit.

Implicit in Hein's (1995,1998), ideas is his understanding of cognition and psychology, that is to say how people think and behave. Because every child constructs his/her world according to their experiences, their world will perforce be particular. Their understanding of objects in museums therefore

will depend on the connections which can be made between this object and the world constructed from their past experiences(1995:23).

2.7 Constructivism Discussed:

Though Danielle Rice's (2000), article, *Constructing Informed Practice*, reinforces much of what Hein (1995), recommends, she questions the ways children construct their own meanings from museum exhibits. Accordingly, she reveals that whilst museums offer excellent multi-sensory environments for learning, they are nevertheless artificial settings which present a 'reality' or narrative of the past which is constructed ideologically by a curator. Despite the fact that these were once accepted as 'true' accounts, and to some extent are still regarded as such, nowadays museums have a responsibility to consider a range of meanings through research. Thus when children encounter 'real' objects in an informal museum setting, what is crucial are exhibits which arouse their curiosity. The cognitive dissonance initiated by this curiosity leads to questioning and, as answers are sought, the child moves from what is known to accommodate what is unknown thereby constructing new meanings. The difficulty arises in accommodating relativism by designing exhibits which will resonate with the concepts and past experiences common to large numbers of children. Rice insists, 'Museum educators can work to help viewers live with the ambiguity of not knowing while they explore a large variety of options and interpretations' (Rice,2000:222-225).

Another text which not only covers the same ground as Hein (1995), and Rice (2000), but focuses on the pragmatic issue of how museum exhibitions can ensure their relevance for visitors, is one written by Kodi Jeffery (2000). In the process of explaining how concept mapping and semantic networks can be helpful research tools for museum curators, she says, 'Feelings and emotions may well be the factors that make a museum experience so meaningful' (Jeffery, 2000:216). Acknowledging this possibility she then suggests different strategies which can help museums produce displays which resonate with the feelings and emotions of their visitors. For example she stresses the importance of: first-hand active experiences of objects; sharing learning experiences with others; anticipating visitors' common questions and interests which create

involvement with the exhibits; being aware of common misconceptions and attempting to minimise them; facilitating mediation between visitors' experiences and the museum's messages through themes; and trying out programmes to test for the validity/relevance of these messages (Jeffery, 2000:218-220). In summation Jeffery explains:

We may not always be able to teach just what we want, as we must accept that visitors will guide their own leaning and choose how to incorporate their new experiences into their pre-existing knowledge structures. But we can facilitate that leaning by creating environments where visitors will question their knowledge structures, adding to or rebuilding them as necessary (Jeffery,2000:220).

The children who visited the objects in the Myers Museum will have constructed their own personal path of meaning by using their skills as they participated in a number of open-ended activities. They will be invited to choose objects which excite or interest them, to sketch and focus on them through a treasure hunt and take part in a handling session. Hopefully by reflecting on this experience their curiosity will have motivated them to find answers to their queries, and in the process they will have structured their own learning realizing that, 'one of the most exciting possibilities of working with objects is the development of thought itself' (Delahaye, in Hooper-Greenhill,1991:102) .

2.8 A Constructivist Project:

An example of a museum project which was inspired by constructivist ideas is described by Francine Peterman (1997). This collaborative project, entitled 'iwonder', was undertaken by The Smithsonian Institute, a core group of schools and a university department over a four year period. Its aims were to assess the effectiveness of object-based learning in schools and the museum, and to estimate how this approach affected teaching paradigms and practice.

Throughout the duration of the project regular evaluation sessions were held to promote good communication between all participating groups. The recommendations were as follows: the rewards of learning should be synonymous with the process; students should learn to develop their own potential through curiosity/self-questioning, active learning and constant interaction; understanding should be constructed by the child; children should learn to express a critical voice to enable teachers to learn from their feedback;

and teachers should act as guides and be prepared to improvise and take risks (Peterman,1997:7)²⁷.

This collaborative venture, based on good listening and communication, enabled a cross-fertilization of ideas to burgeon from the interface between the school, the university and the museum. By focusing on teaching with objects, each institution questioned its function, its role, its interconnectedness, its relevance to society and, in a climate of life-long learning, considered its future in evolutionary terms (Peterman,1997: 4,7).

The previous three sections have not merely explained the theory of constructivism, but demonstrate how valuable museum and gallery environments can be for facilitating learning and meta- learning.

2.9 Communicating Aesthetic Awareness in Museums - Being Sensitive²⁸:

Having considered learning in the museum context it is appropriate to focus on the nature of this learning through aesthetic awareness. In this context Carol Jeffers (1999), describes a research project where nineteen children aged between five - thirteen, structured visits for their adult partners from a selection of ten museums. Although the adults and children knew one another, only a few had previous experience of visiting museums. In practically all cases the children were excited by the enterprise, enthused about seeing authentic or 'real' objects, were systematic in their viewing, scouted out the route and even shielded their adult partners if they considered the exhibits unsuitable (Jeffers, 1999:48).

Although the adults prompted occasionally by saying, 'Can you tell me about this ... ?' the children always took the initiative by active exploration and discovery, and to make meanings one child said, 'If you really look and think a lot, then ideas just start popping into your mind' (Jeffers,1999:49). They connected easily with the exhibits, expressed likes and dislikes and generally showed themselves capable of making insightful comments. Furthermore they appeared to grow in confidence throughout the course of the visits, and surprised the adults on many occasions. This action research suggests that when given the chance children not only take their responsibilities seriously, but are

capable of making significant and meaningful relationships with objects.

In the Myers Museum environment the children interacted with one another, with their teachers and with me. As they focused on the ancient objects therefore, the diversity of these social contacts made their æsthetic experience not merely a singular/personal event but a plural/social one²⁹.

2.10 Communicating Æsthetic Awareness in Museums - Teaching and Research:

Although æsthetic awareness can happen in a serendipitous fashion, there are some educators who believe it can be taught. While Jeffers' (1999), project aimed to encourage children to feel 'at home' with art, artefacts and museums, Joshua Taylor's (1971), research argues for art and life to be integrated. After taking a broadly historical survey of art/museum education, he concludes that the imagination is vital for stimulating participation and interaction in a museum environment. Furthermore, every museum experience should be creatively sensuous, 'to catch the eye and hold the mind' and establish a new relationship between the two. He says, 'our tremendous interest in catching the eyes sometimes obscures for us the important fact that the mind must follow ... I mean the whole operation of the mind to think, to feel, to imagine, to dream. This is all part of our mind' (1971:22-23).

For Taylor (1971), the senses and the imagination³⁰ have the potential to expand the mind, and each looking opportunity should focus on art as both living documents and the embodiment of human experience. Museums and galleries offer these experiences in abundance and as such provide a catalyst for instinctive looking. In short, this means being bold enough to interact with art which moves and stimulates us rather than following a prescribed pattern of looking at masterpieces. The 'artwork' may indeed be moving and stimulating but equally it may not (1971:23).

An æsthetic education project which was conducted with pre-school children is highlighted by the scholar, Mary Stokrocki (1984). Whilst at school the children engaged with a large variety of media; then, armed with a host of multi-sensory experiences, they were taken to a museum where they found it easy to make connections with the art. She says, 'Art appreciation often grows from knowing

about art to verbally communicating feelings about it' (1984:13). Once in the museum she noticed that the children began to identify, discriminate and transform their visual experiences using a variety of verbal, non-verbal and metaphorical responses. However, because the children's vocabulary was limited they often used gestures, signs, marks, sounds and metaphorical phrases to convey meanings, thereby making sense of the world through the art they experienced. In consequence, as Stokrocki says, 'the art world becomes more alive for children when their natural sense of curiosity, personal self, previous experiences, and imagination are enhanced' (1984:16).

Throughout Stokrocki's(1984), entire project the children interacted with the media, the art, their peers, parents and their teachers and in the process they responded and expressed themselves freely. However, a corresponding development occurred whereby, 'parents, instructor and researcher experienced an expanded aesthetic base, far beyond what they originally construed' (1984:16). This would seem to indicate that where adults and children exist in 'aesthetic' environments reciprocal responses are likely. Thus, the social and aesthetic dimensions of my own study will develop as the children and I react not only to the ancient objects but to one another.

Summary

To find our bearings is to know where we are - to be aware of our position in an environment. Therefore, to gain a sense of spatial identity, requires a complex relationship with the space itself and the phenomena encountered in that space. In this chapter I have tried to show how the children's experiences in museums are contingent not only upon the physical aspects of space, but upon the social interactions which take place whilst they are there. This notwithstanding, in the process of focusing on the physical and social dimensions of my research context, I have considered a variety of philosophical, phenomenological and epistemological theories. This discussion is intended to provide a sufficiently detailed background upon which the children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects can be viewed.

1. See Chapter 2, Note 2.

2. Action research dictates that a situated researcher investigates a specific area of inquiry and effects change spontaneously as a direct result of their research observations and recommendations. In my own study, although I performed a dual role as a museum educator and researcher in a similar way to an action researcher, my goal was different. Instead, by pursuing a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of primary school children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects, I aimed to do three things: first to gain a greater understanding of the children within this lived experience; second to make this knowledge available as a research document; and third, to put it to good use in my own pedagogic practice.

3. Examples of these extensive collections are: The British Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museo Egizio, Turin. Both the British Museum and Museo Egizio hosted the exhibitions, time machine: *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art* (1994-5, and 1995, respectively). See Chapter 1, for an analysis of adult experiences of time machine: *Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*, at the British Museum. When the Myers Museum Centenary Exhibition finished at Eton (1999-2000), it moved to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2000-2001).

4. See Chapter 7 Note 11 for a discussion of the concept of mystery applied to the ancient Egyptians.

5. In his book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (2003/1978), drew attention to the way in which Western writers have patronized the Orient by positioning it as the binary opposite of the Occident and describing it as 'other' (Bullock and Trombley, 1999:617). From the evidence of colonial involvement cited on page 108, part of the attraction of collecting ancient Egyptian artefacts might well have been borne out of a hegemonic desire to plunder that which was different, and to demonstrate a superior power over the 'other'. He says: 'My idea in *Orientalism* was to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprisons us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange' (Said, 2003:xvii).

6. However, it should be noted that even the accounts of ancient writers are not without cultural bias. For example, Herodotus, the Greek historian, writing in the fifth century BC, 'frequently contrasts the rationality of the Greek with the irrationality of the Asiatic Xerxes' (Bullock and Trombley, 1999:617).

7. Our understanding of different cultures, ancient or otherwise, will always be mediated by the cultural and historical influences which construct the traditions we negotiate in order to form our beliefs and opinions. Furthermore, our emotional responses are also subject to the influences of this cultural and historical matrix. Writing about the historicity of understanding, Gadamer (1975), explains how the power of the written word which contributes to tradition, presents its own problems. He suggests:

The hermeneutical problem ... desires to understand tradition correctly, i.e. reasonably without prejudice. But there is a special difficulty about this, in that the sheer fact of something being written down confers on it an authority of particular weight. It is not altogether easy to realise that what is written down can be untrue. The written word has the tangible quality of something that can be demonstrated and is like a proof. It requires a special critical effort to free oneself from the prejudice in favour of what is written down and to distinguish here also, no less than in the case of oral assertions,

8. For a floor plan of the arrangement of the Centenary Exhibition at the Myers Museum see p.102.

9. For illustrations of these four exhibits see Chapter 5 pp. 215 - 218.

10. For a detailed description of the outreach activities, see Appendix III.

11. For illustrations of the objects and jigsaws used during the outreach sessions, see pp. 145 - 150.

12. For a detailed description of the museum activities, see Appendix III; and for illustrations of the objects used in the treasure hunt and the handling session, see pp.103 - 107, and pp. 108 - 110 respectively.

13. Due to the positive response from schools, it was decided that their visits should take place in the mornings, leaving afternoon sessions for the general public. This arrangement enabled the children to occupy the entire gallery without the threat of disturbing or being disturbed by the general public.

14. The children used plastic gloves when touching the handling collection to protect the objects and to protect themselves from any splinters or jagged edges. For a description of the children's activities see Appendix III.

15. While Hooper-Greenhill (1994a), tells us that audiences, resources/budgets, training, marketing, evaluation, and types of educational provision are the main functions of most museums today, the Myers Museum is different. As a very small private institution, it functions on a much more ad-hoc basis. Though audiences, budget, marketing and education were considered by the curator and myself prior to the exhibition in 1999-2000, this was only a temporary state of affairs.

16. Francis Frascina, (1993), comments on the way in which museums and galleries not only confer status on the objects they display, but also exercise power. He explains:

An alternative account, put forward since at least the 1960s, suggests that museums and galleries are powerful institutions that, by their selection and curatorship, accord a particular cultural and socio-economic value to the objects they conserve. It's not, so the argument goes, that they provide a space into which great art can be brought for display; rather, that they confer 'greatness' on works by deciding to display them. Religious metaphors have also been coined - museums as temples, critics as clergy, æsthetic experiences as mystical revelation, the 'art world' as a secular replacement for religion. Museums have also been scrutinized as educational institutions, and many critics and historians have concluded that they are among the main agencies for transmitting an effective dominant culture (Frascina, in Wood, Frascina, Harris and Harrison,1993:80-81).

17. The ideas quoted above, influenced in no small part by the theories of cultural distinction propounded by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1979), should be considered here with reference to the distinctive ways in which art/artefacts are consumed in cultural settings by different social groups. Unmasking the connection between artistic taste, education and specific social classes, Bourdieu takes an anti-Kantian position and says:

One cannot fully understand cultural practices unless 'culture', in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back into 'culture'

in the anthropological sense, and the elaborated taste for the most refined objects is reconnected with the elementary taste for the flavours of food. Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education; surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin ... This predisposes taste to function as markers of 'class'. The manner in which culture has been acquired lives on in the manner of using it (Bourdieu, in Korsmeyer,1998:150).

For those who possess the 'cultural capital' bequeathed by their class and education, art can be consumed, as Bourdieu attests:

Consumption is ... a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is the code, into which it is encoded ... A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines without rhyme or reason (Bourdieu, in Korsmeyer,1998:151).

It is the specific way in which a group perceives, evaluates or acts in consuming works of art which determines its 'habitus'. Taste will therefore presuppose a certain aesthetic understanding characteristic of a particular group. Endorsing this Bourdieu says: 'Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (Bourdieu, in Korsmeyer,1998:154).

Though the Myers Museum is situated within a public school which confers 'cultural capital' and a specific 'habitus' on its secondary-aged pupils, all the children who visited the exhibition and participated in my research, were of primary age and came from over twenty different schools. While some had experience of visiting museums and others not, all were studying ancient Egypt. One can assume therefore, that each child had been invested with *some* 'cultural capital' though it would vary.

18. As the ancient objects in the handling collection (ref. figs. 3.16 - 3.20), were fragile and rare it was decided that I should supervise all the handling sessions and thereby take responsibility for the safety of the objects. See Appendix III for a description of the handling sessions.

For a theoretical discussion of touch and haptics see Chapter 2 pages 74 - 75 and 76 - 78.

19. The notion of 'morning-ness' which Bollnow (1989), describes is that joyous enthusiasm which breathes exhilaration with every breath. It is a sense of happiness which wants to acknowledge the day's potential; as he says, ' [by] the feeling of morning-ness ... I mean to signify the experience of a fresh, happy, forward-looking sense of life such as one experiences most purely in the early hours of the morning' (1989:17-19).

20. For a discussion of the role of memory in the children's experience see Chapter 6, p.289; and Chapter 7, pp.317 - 320.

21. Although I was able to observe all the children during the handling sessions which prevented me from observing most of the drawing and treasure hunt activities, there were

two occasions when one class of sixteen and another of seventeen children visited the museum. These small numbers enabled me to accompany and observe the children throughout their entire visit.

22. Listed in The National Curriculum History syllabus are nine aims to help children:

- to become excited and interested in the past.
 - to begin to understand the values of past societies and how attitudes and beliefs influenced people's actions.
 - to extend their knowledge and understanding of past events and peoples.
 - to understand that the past was different from the present.
 - to recognise that there is continuity in human affairs.
 - to develop a sense of chronology.
 - to recognise the nature of evidence (facts versus opinions).
 - to understand that events may have many causes and that one event may have influenced others.
 - to understand that historical explanations are provisional, debatable and sometimes controversial.
- (HMI 1988).

In particular, The National Curriculum cites ancient Egypt as an example of a world study of a past society. It suggests that children compare ancient and contemporary societies; study chronology; the reasons for the rise and fall of this ancient civilisation; significant places and individuals, and its distinctive contribution to history (QCA,1999:107). To do this children should focus on one particular object to make inferences about ancient Egypt; and a range of objects to determine what has survived from that time (QCA,1992:Unit 10). Through observation, classification, inference and deduction the children should be able to construct an understanding of most aspects of everyday life - from houses to cities, work and leisure, food and health, pictures, words and communication, beliefs, customs, gods and goddesses and temples and tombs (QCA,1999:107).

23. For references to the children's experiences of the 'real' thing see Chapter 5, p.231; 253; Chapter 6, pp.279 - 281; and Chapter 7, pp.312 - 317.

24. The role of the imagination and empathy in historical interpretations are explored in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

25. Although Hooper-Greenhill (1990a and 1992), uses numerous texts by Foucault, she focuses mainly on *The Order of Things* (1970), and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974), when she discusses the ways in which museum contexts in terms of their collections, displays and practices not only shape our knowledge of the world, but influence the way in which we position ourselves in relation to this knowledge. She explains:

The internal and external spaces of the museum partly constitute the way in which material things can be grouped and made visible. The articulations of material things, internal gallery spaces, internal and external built structures affect both the desires of the curator and the perceptions of the visitor. The physical three-dimensional experience of the subject in the space of the museum is the knowing in the museum. It is a spatialized perception, a form of knowing that involves bodily responses and movements in a three-dimensional knowledge-environment where the possibilities of what may be known are partly defined in advance through both the processes of collection management and the interrelationships of material things and museum spaces (Hooper-Greenhill,1990a:67).

Focusing specifically on the tension/crisis of meanings created by works of art and their contexts of display, Daniel Buren (1996), says:

It seems to me that it is much more a matter of showing what a work will imply immediately in a given place, and perhaps thanks finally to the work,

what the place will imply. The crisis between the function of the museum (architecture) and that of art (visual object) will appear dialectically from the tension thus created ... The history still to be made will take into consideration the place (the architecture) in which a work comes to rest (develops) as an integral part of the work in question and all the consequences such a link implies. It is not a question of ornamenting (disfiguring or embellishing) the place (the architecture) in which the work is installed, but of indicating as precisely as possible the way the work belongs in the place and vice versa, as soon as the latter is shown (Buren, in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996:314-315).

There are two points here: first, that art is never autonomous; second, that the meanings of art are created by a tripartite mediation between the artist (through his/her art work), the spectator and the context. Though this study focuses on ancient Egyptian objects rather than modern art, the substance of the argument still pertains.

26. Listing the principles of learning Hein (1991), tells us that learning needs to be an active process where the learner interacts with the world both practically and mentally with hands and minds, and where language and learning are intertwined. Furthermore, it is a process which reinforces itself as more meanings and structures of meaning are constructed. However, learning doesn't take place in a vacuum, it is socially constructed by virtue of our interconnectedness with those with whom we live, and these associations give our knowledge its *raison d'être*. This notwithstanding, learning takes time, one needs to be motivated - to want to know why, and for new learning to take place one needs to have previous knowledge to build on - to move from the known to the unknown (Hein, 1991:90-91).

27. Although my study seeks to move towards a holistic embodied understanding of children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects, it does nevertheless consider issues connected to primary pedagogy. One text which addresses these issues is, 'Primary School Learners', by Caroline Gipps and Barbara MacGilchrist (1999). This comprehensive and informative chapter discusses, theories about learning from teachers' and learners' perspectives; reciprocal views about the teacher/learner relationship; and effective teachers in action. The issues they identify consider: the complexity and multi-dimensionality of pedagogy acknowledging that attitudes and beliefs affect outcomes; that teachers need to be self-reflexive to understand that their own meta-cognition like their pupils' is socio-culturally constructed; to provide a supportive and yet challenging, creative and multi-sensory environment which recognizes that the emotions play a key role in cognitive development; to help children cultivate a high level of self-esteem through pedagogy which promotes kindness, praise, encouragement, questioning, discussion, scope for autonomy, and expecting the best through open-ended collaborations; and finally keeping abreast of new research (Gipps and MacGilchrist, in Mortimore, 1999:46-67).

28. For a discussion of the *æsthetic* as it is interpreted in this study see Chapter 2, Note 4.

29. For evidence of the children's reactions during their museum visit see their statements in Chapters 5 and 6.

30. For a theoretical discussion of the imagination see Chapter 2, pages 57 -61; and for the children's use of their imagination during their museum experience see their statements in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE OBJECTS USED DURING THE OUTREACH SESSION

- 4.1 A Commemorative Plate celebrating the Marriage of H.R.H. The Prince Edward to Miss Sophie Rhys-Jones. Bone China. 19-6-1999. Diameter 12.3 cm.
- 4.2 An Ancient Chinese bowl. Earthenware. Date unknown. Diameter 13 cm.
- 4.3 A Victorian Doll. Porcelain head (hair partially gilded and painted), forearms, lower legs and feet; remaining body of cotton stuffed with horsehair; cotton pantaloons and two petticoats; third and fourth petticoats and dress in muslin. c. 1860. Length 43 cm.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF OBJECTS FROM THE MYERS COLLECTION
MADE INTO JIGSAWS FOR USE DURING THE OUTREACH SESSIONS
AND INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION:
'The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College'
THE MYERS MUSEUM 1999 -2000

- 4.4 A Cat Amulet - Blue glazed Steatite, with Electrum collar and armlets. c.950BC. Height 3 cm.
- 4.5 Four Sons of Horus - Polychrome Faïence. c. 1295 BC. Height 14-15.5 cm.
- 4.6 Chalice with Narrative Decoration in Relief - Faïence. c. 925 BC. Height 16 cm.
- 4.7 Doll with Beaded Hair - Linen Thread and Faïence. c.1991-1783 BC. Height 7.5 cm.
- 4.8 Pectoral Ornament - Electrum with remains of Lapis Lazuli, Carnelian and Feldspar inlay. c. 1897 - 1841 BC. Height 3.7 cm.
- 4.9 Portrait of a Man - Encaustic on Lime Wood. c. AD. 165. Height 40 cm.
- 4.10 Face Inlay - Red Jasper. c. 1294 - 1279 BC. Height 3.5 cm.
- 4.11 Offering Bearer - Gessoed and Painted Wood. c. 2150 BC. Height 44 cm.

4.1 A Commemorative Plate
19 - 6 - 1999



4.2 An Ancient Chinese bowl
Date Unknown





4.3 Victorian Doll
c.1860

4.4 A Cat Amulet
c.950 BC



4.5 Four Sons of Horus
c. 1295 BC



4.6 Chalice
c. 925 BC

4.7 Doll with Beaded Hair
c.1991-1783 BC



4.8 Pectoral Ornament
c. 1897 - 1841 BC



4.9 Portrait of a Man
c. AD. 165

4.10 Face Inlay
c. 1294 - 1279 BC



4.11 Offering Bearer
c. 2150 BC



CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH AS REACHING OUT

The first tourist to visit Egypt and to leave an account was Herodotus of Halicarnassus, in the mid-5th century BC. Called the 'Father of History' by the Roman statesman Cicero, Herodotus was researching the material for Book II of his *History* on the spot. To do so he travelled extensively in Egypt and as far south as Aswan. His account is fascinating reading - a mixture of fact and fable, wonderment, scepticism and gullibility all tumbled together in varying degrees (Clayton,1982:7).

As I read these opening lines from the book, *The Rediscovery of Egypt - Artists and Travellers*, the word researching seemed to jump out from the page. Later, as I reflected on Herodotus and imagined him visiting Africa, Italy and the Greek Islands, I began to understand not only how his research was lived, but how it was implicit with travel and discovery.

However, while research does not always necessitate travelling vast distances, it always involves a journey - lit by the light of interest and spurred on by a persistent quest for understanding. In a modern academic sense, research is framed within four aspects of philosophy. First, in terms of ontology - or the nature of reality, it asks: what is the nature of the world? what is real? and what counts as evidence? Second, in terms of epistemology - or the origins and nature of knowing and the construction of knowledge, it questions the relationship between the knower and the known, and the role which values play in understanding. Third, in terms of logic - or principles of demonstration and verification, it asks: are causal links between items of information possible? And lastly, in terms of teleology - or matters of purpose, it questions what the research is for (Maykut and Morehouse,1994:4).

Thus, once a research question is posed, it influences the choice of a research paradigm or model¹ which, as a belief system or world view, encapsulates its ontological and epistemological orientation. This paradigm, or methodological framework, also suggests a way of investigating the question. The Greek roots of the word methodology we find it comes from *hodos*, meaning 'way', and *logos*, meaning 'study' - thus, to select a suitable methodology effectively means adopting, 'a distinct way of approaching research with particular understandings of purposes, foci, data, analysis and more fundamentally, the

relationship between data and what they refer to' (Guba and Lincoln, in Scott and Usher,1996:61). However, while the methodology describes the approach, the method refers to the range of practices which are used as part of the research procedure.

To answer a question an educational experience, often necessitates using a methodology under the overarching banner of qualitative research. After tracing the five distinctive moments of qualitative research², Denzin and Lincoln (1994), define it saying:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand (Denzin and Lincoln,1994:2).

Though some scholars such as Maykut and Morehouse (1994), draw a distinction between qualitative and quantitative³ research, stressing the phenomenological and positivist divide, others, like Hammersley (1992), and Bryman (1988), refute that they represent two completely opposite approaches to the study of the social world. According to Scott and Usher (1996), 'that is not to deny that differences exist: but it is to suggest that the two methods do not belong within separate research paradigms and thus can sensibly be used within the same investigation' (1996:59).

What are the particular characteristics and philosophical underpinnings of the methodology or paradigm chosen for this qualitative study? Initially, by understanding reality to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon, where the world and those who live in it are interdependent, the researcher and the people who are researched are co-constituted. Through careful reflection of the words, reports and actions of these people in their 'natural setting', the researcher will try to discover the meaning of the structures of what is termed 'lived experience'⁴. Without making generalizations and causal links, and by laying bare his/her biases and prejudices, the researcher will attempt to write about

his/her understanding of the experience by discovering propositions (Maykut and Morehouse,1994:12). Ethnography⁵ and hermeneutic phenomenology⁶ are two examples which use this paradigmatic framework.

In this chapter I want to do two things: first, to describe how, from my own experience of teaching and working in a museum, I was inspired to research primary school children's encounters of ancient Egyptian objects; and second, to explain why I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as an appropriate qualitative methodology for investigating this experience.

1. MAKING CHOICES:

1.1 Where to Go - the Evolution of the Topic and the Question:

In Chapter One, I explained how this research study evolved from an inspirational visit to the British Museum's exhibition, *time machine: Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art*, 1994-5. I also described how my interest in the ways in which human beings consume art in different contexts, led me to use this exhibition, not merely as a case study in a subsequent research project, but also as a catalyst to study interventionist exhibitions⁷. I then related how this research evolved from my involvement within a new exhibition at the Myers Museum, Eton, entitled, *The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College*, 1999-2000, where I initiated an educational programme for primary school children who study ancient Egypt as part of the National Curriculum⁸. As I watched the children encounter the objects in the museum and listened to them relate how amazing, how strange and yet how fascinating it all was, I began to question the nature of their experience. What was this encounter 'really like'?⁹ Throughout these preliminary months as I considered this question, I uncovered the possibilities of a new research project.

1.2 The Form of Travel - Choosing the Research Methodology:

However, wondering about the children's experience coincided with a growing interest in hermeneutic phenomenology. Originally initiated by a doctoral seminar at the Institute of Education¹⁰, this methodology helped me realized that what had sustained my research interest in the exhibition *time machine* in 1994-5, was not just the interventionist strategy and the art, interesting thought

they were, it was the *people's experiences*. Comparing and contrasting the various ways in which they responded to the art by watching and listening to the videotape intrigued me. Henceforth, I wanted to investigate the meanings of these commonalities and differences.

As I started to fulfil my curatorial/teaching responsibilities at the Myers Museum and orient to my new research study, I found myself at a cross-roads where my interests in children, education, hermeneutic phenomenology and ancient Egyptian art converged. Van Manen suggests, 'It is not until I have identified my interest in the nature of a selected human experience that a true phenomenological questioning is possible. To do phenomenological research is to question something phenomenologically and, also, to be addressed by the question of what something is "really like" ' ¹¹(van Manen,1990:42).

By asking the question, 'What is it like to experience ancient Egyptian objects from a child's perspective?' I wanted to gain a thorough understanding of these children in the context of this experience. Furthermore, by probing the children's feelings or embodied responses, I hoped to be able to gain a holistic understanding which embraced the emotional, cognitive and social aspects of their being. Gadamer suggests about how questions are not only fundamental to experience, but how they drive and direct us towards the open road of research and understanding. He maintains:

The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities (Gadamer,1975:266).

This indicates the direction of our enquiry ... We cannot have experiences without asking questions. The recognition that an object is different and not as we first thought, obviously involves the question whether it is this or that. The openness that is part of this experience is, from a logical point of view, precisely the openness of being this or that. It has the structure of a question (Gadamer,1975:325).

Thus, while my research question partly emerged from my interest in ancient Egypt, my desire to investigate the children's museum experience was far more compelling. Although new to museum education, I was an experienced teacher familiar with the *educere* and *educare* aims of pedagogy, which underpin the protecting, directing and orienting skills so crucial for effective practice (van Manen,1991:38). Consequently, as my varied teaching, curatorial and research roles developed, I was determined to keep education central to the purpose of the

exhibition.

Choosing hermeneutic phenomenology as an educational research method seemed an appropriate way of investigating the children's encounter. Smith comments on the relationship between research and methodology. He says, 'Gadamer (1977,1979,1985) has suggested that it is not possible, in genuine inquiry, to establish [a] correct method of inquiry independent of what it is one is inquiring into. This is because *what* is being investigated itself holds part of the answer concerning *how* it should be investigated'(Smith,in Short,1991:198).

Had I wanted to compare children's educational experiences of the Myers Museum with the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, with a view to suggesting improvements, then I would have chosen a case study approach. Alternatively, if I had wanted to work as a museum educator/ researcher with the intention of determining the cultural/social behaviour of a specific group of children by describing, analysing and interpreting their visit to the museum, then an ethnographic study may have been appropriate. Or, if I had wanted to work in the museum field as a basis for understanding the children's experience, and formulating a strategy to intervene, then I might have considered an action research method. Instead, I chose hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate the children's encounters, because I wanted to be part of the children's lived experience, and describe what it was like to *be a child having that experience* ¹² as far as that was possible. Furthermore, by using hermeneutics, I wanted to understand the meanings of this experience, and generate questions which would explore some aspects of pedagogical practice which are often taken-for-granted¹³. Smith(1991), makes this clearer when he describes hermeneutical research:

Far more important is its overall interest which is in the question of human meaning and of how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on. As such, the hermeneutic imagination works to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within grander schemes of things. Hermeneutics is about finding ourselves, and curiously enough, is about losing ourselves ... the mark of good interpretative research is not in the degree to which it follows a specified methodological agenda, but in the degree to which it can show understanding of what it is that is being investigated (Smith, in Short, 1991:200-201).

Some examples of hermeneutic phenomenological research studies which have

their orientation in everyday experiences are as follows: 'Feeling alone' (Barrell, in Pollio, Henley and Thompson,1997:157-191); 'The "Secret Place" in the life of the child' (Langeveld,1984:181-189); 'Friendship'(Becker,1992:145-163); and, 'Beyond words: the experience of the ineffable'(Dienske,1985:3-19).

Having described how I oriented to this research journey towards hermeneutic phenomenology, I will now explain the philosophical ideas which underpin it, in addition to showing how the methods I used provided an appropriate route for opening up my research question.

2. HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY - UNDERSTANDING 'LIVED EXPERIENCE':

2.1 'Lived experience':

As I witnessed the children enter the museum and encounter the ancient objects, often with the light of wonder in their eyes¹⁴, I too began to wonder - not just about the objects themselves, but more significantly, about the mystery of the children's experience. Just watching their gestures and facial expressions and listening to what they had to say posed numerous questions. Seeing and touching the ancient objects had an effect on them, but how could I begin to understand their thoughts and feelings? What, I wondered, did they feel like when they stepped into this museum for the first time? Did they, like me, feel unnerved by the mummified exhibits and yet stunned by the beauty of so much ancient Egyptian craftsmanship? Although I could see the children in front of me I was perplexed; how could I find out what it was like to *be* a child having this experience? Becker tells us that, 'phenomenologists study situations in the everyday world from the viewpoint of the experiencing person. This experiential view helps phenomenologists understand people and human life so that they can work effectively with them' (Becker,1992:7). This was what I wanted to do: by researching the children's museum visit in a hermeneutic phenomenological way, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of this particular experience.

How did this method work? At this point I turned to van Manen (2002), who explains that as a human science methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology tries to access the meaning of human experience by attempting to reveal the

patterns and structures hidden within it (van Manen,2002:7)¹⁵. To conduct human science research therefore, I needed to focus on the children's experience, become part of it and *live* the method .

2.2 The Lifeworld - the 'World of Immediate Experience':

Being in possession of life as 'immediately belonging to us', as Dilthey says, points to the notion of the lifeworld (Dilthey, in van Manen,1990:35). This concept is a fundamental one for phenomenology. For example, in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl says, 'The lifeworld, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there existing in advance for us ... not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon' (Husserl, in Warnke,1987:36). This is what we experience as *being* which always undergirds our awareness of our interconnection with the world. The children's experience in the museum, like waking up, washing, dressing, breakfasting and travelling to school and then to the museum that morning was an integral part of their *being* as children.

Heidegger's(1973), interpretation of this concept was expressed differently and based on what he calls *Dasein* or *there being*. In *Being and Time* (1973), he explains that being is being-in-the-world, and therefore a contextual phenomenon. Furthermore, the nature of being-in-the-world is *time* and synonymous with a present, a past and a future (1973:38). For him, human being was no longer a split Cartesian mind/body phenomenon dependent upon certain knowledge of that existence, it was a holistic, situated affair. Thus, in Heideggerian terms, each child's experience of ancient Egyptian objects was contingent upon their physically *being* within the museum context, interacting with peers, teachers and the objects, as integral features of that space.

Another aspect of Heidegger's (1975), explanation of *Dasein* is its relationship to what he called the 'fourfold' - earth, sky, divinities and mortals - whereby human beings are quite naturally part of the world; in other words, human beings and the world co-constitute one another. 'In the truest sense, the person is viewed as having no existence apart from the world, and the world as having

no existence apart from persons' (Valle, King and Halling,1989:7). Thus, Dasein or being-in-the-world, implicitly incorporates the other three components as a being *with* (Heidegger,1975:149). Bramall (1998), makes this clearer explaining:

'Being-in-the-world' is from the outset organically and irretrievably being-with ... For Heidegger there are two modes of being-in-the-world; the 'normal' or pre-reflective, and the 'abnormal' which includes reflection ... the need for understanding results from the recognition that things may be other than they are, where possibilities are revealed as such due to a lack of fit between actuality and possibility ... in Heidegger's schema then, understanding arises out of practical human concerns and actions (Bramall, unpublished Ph.D. thesis,1998:55-56).

Though the concept of 'normality' will always imply a set of criteria which are culturally and historically specific, for Heidegger (1973), being-in-the-world 'normally' is a state when we have no consciousness of *being* - like a completely undifferentiated fibre woven tightly into a vast fabric. Merleau-Ponty(1962), refers to this phenomenon as the 'real'. He attests:

The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions (Merleau-Ponty,1962:x-xi).

2.3 Consciousness and Intentionality - Existence and Essence:

While this state of *being* is implicitly pre-reflective, once we begin to respond to the world through our senses we become simultaneously conscious and reflective. It is as if we have been dislocated like a pulled thread, raised to a vantage point where we become aware of ourselves and the world. Things are shown to us and made manifest. When the ancient Greeks used the verb - *phainesthai* - they meant, to show or manifest something; today we use the word phenomenon as a noun, meaning that which shows itself or appears (Heidegger,1973:51). This appearance is not an exclusively visual experience however, it is a complex multi-sensuous encounter which gives birth to our theoretical attitude to life. As conscious beings we become inextricably tied and oriented *to* the world by our thoughts *of* the world - drawn out from an embodied pre-reflective existence. This is known as intentionality. Valle, King and Halling(1989), maintain:

To be conscious is to be conscious of something ... consciousness is, therefore, said to be intentional in nature or to be characterized by

intentionality. Intentionality addresses the ongoing dimension of our consciousness, that we are always in relation to that which is beyond us. Merleau-Ponty(1962) points out that intentionality extends to our whole bodily being; the way that a person walks or carries himself or herself speaks to that persons's continual relationship to his or her surroundings (Valle, King and Halling,1989:11).

Our waking, conscious existence or being-in-the-world then is saturated by intentionality, and directs the orientation of our experiences. However, because everyone is unique their experiences will perforce be unique. Notwithstanding, there are characteristics which contribute to the essence of experiences which can enlighten our understanding of being if they are researched. Trying to access the *essence* of the children's experience though, promised to be a complex process. Van Manen reveals that, 'Essence alludes to the ever questionable ways of the being of being, to the ways that a phenomenon reveals itself in thinking, to the ways we encounter something, and to the ways that we ourselves are constantly put into question by the being of the things of our world'(van Manen,2002:4). Therefore, I needed to reflect on the children's feelings, (as those embodied verbal and gestural clues to their state of pre-reflection and communion with the world), point *to* the common characteristics of their particular experience, and point *out* how these characteristics inform an understanding of the meaning structures of the experience (Gadamer, in van Manen,1990:26).

2.4 Finding the Words - the Challenge of a Phenomenological Inquiry:

Focusing on this specific experience I quickly became aware that every child related uniquely to the museum objects. As a phenomenon, it not only revealed but it concealed itself too, and I often found certain aspects elusive. Therefore, trying to access the pre-reflective sphere of this experience was a challenge. Taking advice from Husserl I knew that, 'to return to the things themselves ... is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks' (Husserl, in Merleau-Ponty,1962:viii-ix). And, the way in which Merleau-Ponty suggests one 're-achieves this direct and primitive contact with the world' is to use language - by giving a rigorous and scientific account of the phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty,1962:vii).

As I reflected on the children's experiences I identified with certain aspects of

their feelings - what they were telling me was familiar, and yet somehow different. Arendt(1958), describes this as 'human plurality', whereby behaviour and speech have both distinct and yet equal characteristics (Arendt, in Maykut and Morehouse,1994:27). Thus, the more I listened the more I became aware that, though there were unique facets of the experience which seemed to run through many of their accounts, there were also commonalities. It became clear that exploring these commonalities or themes was a way of understanding the essence or meaning structure of their experience. However, to find the words to express these meanings, I would need to reflect on the themes in a rigorous and systematic way; to 'strive for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed in the text' (van Manen,1990:17). Furthermore, it was only by using words which exactly described the essence of the experience, that the lived quality and significance of that experience could be awakened in others (van Manen, 1990:10).

Jardine(1998), explains not only how interpreting an experience can reveal its fecundity, but also how pedagogy can be one of the themes of interpretation, as well as pedagogic at its heart. He says:

Understood interpretatively, such incidents can have a generative and re-enlivening effect on the interweaving texts and textures of human life in which we are all embedded. Bringing out these living interweavings in their full, ambiguous, multivocal character is the task of interpretation. There is thus an intimate connection between interpretation (concerned as it is with the generativity of meaning that comes with the eruption of the new in the midst of the already familiar) and pedagogy (concerned as it is with the re-generation of understanding in the young who live here with us in the midst of an already familiar world(Jardine,1998:34).

In the process of describing this method I explain how interpreting the children's gestures, silences, words and language phenomenologically, helped me to move towards an understanding of the meaning of their experience, in addition to applying this knowledge to broader pedagogical issues.

2.5 What is Understanding? What is Interpretation?

According to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, the word hermeneutics originated from the name Hermes, the Greek god (Pearsall and Hanks,2001:858). In an article D. J. Smith (1991), alludes not only to the role which Hermes

fulfilled as a messenger between the gods and mortal men, but also attests to his, 'eternal youthfulness, friendliness, prophetic power and fertility'. Moreover, every hermeneutic exercise encapsulates these characteristics by providing an opportunity for dialogue to make sense of things (Smith, in Short,1991:187).

Initially, although hermeneutics found its *raison d'être* in biblical interpretations, since the twentieth century it has been used as part of the philosophical vanguard challenging the concept of objective knowledge. Bramall (1998), suggests:

In hermeneutics the major changes came partly through the translating of the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. It was Husserl who pioneered the critique of objectivism and the return to an ontological grounding for understanding. The possibility of displacing the orthodox epistemology of interpretation by an ontology of understanding was thus opened up ... This grafting of hermeneutics onto phenomenology met its most celebrated expression in Heidegger's *Being and Time* ... it is this shift from epistemology to ontology that marks off twentieth century hermeneutics from its predecessor and which provides the radical grounds upon which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is constructed(Bramall,1998:54).

This quotation describes how phenomenology, ontology and hermeneutics are linked, and as such is a helpful springboard for demonstrating how they each contribute to an understanding of a hermeneutic phenomenological method.

Heidegger, as already mentioned, believed that *Dasein* or being-in-the-world, was a temporal/historical and contextual phenomenon, but instead of searching for the basic foundations of knowledge below the lifeworld, he focused on how human life is itself a process and product of interpretation¹⁶. In his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer says that while metaphysics had attempted to study being by objectifying it, Heidegger turned the situation on its head; by claiming, 'It is not we who grasp being but being which grasps us'(Gadamer,1976:li).

Gadamer, for his part, developed ideas from both Husserl and Heidegger, and explained that understanding is a primordial way of being and relating to the world. And the way in which we try to make sense of the world through understanding is like taking part in a dialogue or conversation. We stand in the world as a product of our own historical situation, which is not only formed by cultural traditions but is prejudicial. In consequence, when we seek to

understand the world through a text, a work of art, a lecture or even a story, we do so from our own pre-understandings - that is to say we build on previous subjective knowledge by mediating our past with the present. This is a productive not a reproductive process and one which Gadamer calls, 'the fusion of horizons'. He attests:

If we place ourselves in the situation of someone else, for example, then we shall understand him ... This is not the empathy of one individual for another, nor is it the application to another person of our own criteria, but it always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other... To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand - not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion ... In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons (Gadamer, 1975:271,272, 273).

Understanding one another through text or dialogue makes us deeply attentive to language, and aware of a deepening sense of the interpretability of life itself. It is always a creative process which takes us beyond our present situation, and is determined by the meeting of these respective horizons which change as we go through life.

2.6 Considering Various Phenomenological Methods of Researching 'Lived Experience':

I now want to demonstrate how I turned to lived experience by drawing on the phenomenological writing of van Manen (1990, 1997), Bollnow (1969), and Vandenberg (1992, 1997)¹⁷.

Van Manen's text, *Researching Lived Experience - Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1990), commended itself to me for two reasons: first, because it resonated with my own experiences of teaching, parenting and researching; and second, because it presents a clear step-by-step account of how hermeneutic phenomenological can be used to study pedagogical situations.

Three main European influences seem to have shaped van Manen's work philosophically, namely: the Utrecht School where the descriptive *Fenomenologische Pedagogiek* work of Langeveld, Beets and Beekman predominated; the French Existentialist School of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, which stressed the phenomenological ideas of perception and embodiment; and

the German *Geisteswissenschaftliche* tradition of Dilthey, Heidegger, Bollnow and Gadamer, which drew upon the phenomenological work of Husserl (van Manen,1990:ix).

Explaining how pedagogy, phenomenology and hermeneutics relate to one another in educational research, van Manen (1990), says:

Pedagogy requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children. Pedagogy requires a way with language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection to contribute to one's pedagogical thoughtfulness(van Manen,1990:2).

Thus, van Manen's method taught me to focus on children's behaviour and verbal statements throughout their experience; to analyze, reflect and interpret the pre-conceptual and conceptual meanings of their experience; and to write and rewrite to communicate this understanding, with a view to becoming more pedagogically thoughtful (van Manen,1990:4).

However, though this text has given me a firm grounding in the theory and practice of hermeneutic phenomenology, I have four reservations. First, van Manen's (1990), definition of pedagogy; second, his use of personal, parental and pedagogical examples; third, his ambivalence to theory while advocating a theoretical phenomenological method; and finally, his reluctance to apply his findings to a specific educational domain.

While I agree that pedagogy may be about protecting, directing and orienting children, it has traditionally been about teaching other people's children not one's own. Thus, by drawing heavily on his own experiences of teaching and parenting, which is a perfectly valid way of researching phenomenologically, van Manen (1990), runs the risk of making this study solipsistic and therefore unlikely to withstand academic scrutiny. However, there is a fundamental issue of the validity of subjective interpretations here which van Manen successfully counters. He maintains:

The reason that professionals remain intrigued with human science inquiry is that it is a science of plausible insight, and these insights speak not only to our intellectual competence but also to our practical intuitive capabilities. A good phenomenological text has the effect of making us suddenly 'see' something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience. This seeing of meaning is not merely a cognitive affair. The production of insight must proceed through the creation of a research text that speaks to our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities. Phenomenological

understanding is distinctly existential, emotive, enactive, embodied, situational and nontheoretic; a powerful phenomenological text thrives on certain irrevocable tension between what is unique and what is shared, between particular and transcendent meaning, and between the reflective and the pre-reflective spheres of the lifeworld (van Manen, 1997:345-346).

From the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, it is impossible for anyone to assume an omniscient or free-floating position and thereby deliver purely objective interpretations, because everyone, by being-in-the-world, cannot escape their own history, nor think beyond the traditions which have moulded them. Nonetheless, van Manen makes a claim for the way that this, 'science of plausible insight' should be carried out. Despite advocating the use of a theoretical phenomenological method, he determined not to produce educational theory from the insights and meanings of pedagogical experiences, or apply his findings to specific educational experiences. While his text, *The Tact of Teaching* (1991), demonstrates the importance of understanding what it is like to be part of a sensitive, symbiotic pedagogical relationship, which may enhance one's self-understanding and knowledge of the child, it needs, I suggest, to be taken further.

Bollnow's¹⁸ text, *The Scientific Character of Educational Theory* (1969), is grounded in the German tradition of Husserl and Heidegger, and in a similar way to van Manen (1990), sets out a triadic method for studying educational experiences. In Bollnow's case he begins with a linguistic phase where texts are mined for phenomenological meaning. He says, 'The richer and more differentiated the linguistic interpretation is realised, the richer and more differentiated is the thing therewith apprehended' (Bollnow, in Vandenberg, 1969:193). Like van Manen, he advocates revealing one's pre-understandings, then, once the linguistic analysis has been completed, the basic educational phenomenon should be disclosed through the phenomenological phase. Van Manen agrees that this disclosure, 'should have cognitive meaning, logic, conceptual, intellectual and moral intelligibility', in addition to phenomenological insight by being grounded in the lived world through language (van Manen, in Vandenberg, 1997:197). Grounding these insights in terms of the phenomena of space, time, body and human relations is also important in the way that it relates to the final or categorical phase. This is

concerned with formulating a conceptual structure which not only takes account of the educational phenomenon, but is differentiated from other educational areas, so that its concepts can have more general educational relevance (Bollnow, in Vandenberg,1997:199). As Bollnow explains:

The analysis shows its power only in that it does not remain within the area of language but passes over to things, and then is continuously disclosing things, for the world lightens itself through language. And thus the phenomenological description of things develops out of the linguistic usage. Hermeneutical educational theory is in this respect phenomenology, i.e. making visible the fundamental phenomena of education ... the phenomenological description must finally lead to a strict working out of the general conceptual structure with which the single educational phenomenon is appropriately grasped (Bollnow, in Vandenberg,1992:123).

Though Bollnow (1969), is not afraid to categorize his phenomenological research as educational theory, its limitations lie in the emphasis he places on language at the expense of using gestures and silence to interpret the meanings of experiences, and particularly, educational experiences.

The American phenomenologist, Donald Vandenberg, has been included here because of his work in educational research. In the text, *Phenomenology and Educational Discourse* (1997), he contributes two very insightful chapters, in addition to editing papers by Gordon, Greene, Lippitz, Smith, Strasser and van Manen. While he applauds the work of his contributors, he is strongly in favour of making phenomenological research address educational theory and practice. He says, 'the whole point of a phenomenological approach is to wed this theorising to the things themselves' (Vandenberg,1997:201). Citing how Husserl came to the realization that theorizing about consciousness had no credibility unless it related to the consciousness of specific experiences, he makes the point that the phenomenology of education should also relate to specific disciplines and therefore have particular content. For van Manen however, this is of no account (1990), (Vandenberg,1992:124-125; 1997:201).

By comparing the approaches of all three scholars I discovered not only how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments, but also resolved to relate my findings to practical educational situations¹⁹. Thus, with this knowledge behind me I knew that once my data was collected, I would need to analyze and interpret it with a view to establishing contact with the pre-

reflective and reflective spheres of primary school children's lived experiences of ancient Egyptian objects. I would then need to make it textually explicit, and finally ground it in the educational theory of primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.

3 LIVING THE METHOD:

3.1 Collecting data:

One of the most fundamental aspects of qualitative research is the relationship between the researcher and the researched within an everyday situation (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:3). In this particular study I played an integrated triadic role in the children's experience - as a curatorial assistant in charge of the care and accessibility of the collection; as a museum educator responsible for both the children's wellbeing and for teaching them about the ancient Egyptians; and as a researcher.

However, in order to conduct solid educational research I needed to be in touch with the complexities of the children's lived experience, aware that everything which contributed to that experience was that experience, and as a result might help me understand its meanings. Van Manen explains that while it is possible to collect data in various forms, whether through observations, interviews or personal descriptions, nothing can replicate the moment or moments when an experience is taking place. When we reflect upon an experience we must always bear in mind that the data of that experience are *transformations* and therefore modifications of it. The hermeneutic phenomenological task then is, 'to find access to life's living dimensions while realizing that the meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life's oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence' (van Manen, 1990:54).

I have already explained how hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand lived experience, and how qualitative research is social practice, interpreted by researchers who are co-constituted by the people and the context which are the object of their research. Valle, King and Halling explain: 'By treating perception as intentional in nature, the objective and subjective are seen as inseparable, one unable to exist without the other ... an approach that is totally

objective or totally subjective confuses and distorts the very phenomena it seeks to explain/and/or describe (Valle, King and Halling,1989:13).

Moreover, because human beings are co-constituted by their world, the notion that the lifeworld is a resultant effect brought about by some cause does not make philosophical sense. Thus as hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to probe the structures of meaning of lived experience as a way of accessing and understanding the lifeworld, it will not attempt to pose a hypothesis and prove or disprove it, but will rather take its lead from Husserl by, 'turning to the things themselves', and describing them. Because qualitative educational research which uses hermeneutic phenomenology as a human science method seeks to access the pre-conceptual through language, it can never present its findings as an 'exact' science; in consequence, its validity can be brought into question and its findings regarded as flawed if judged on the basis of positivistic criteria. While I acknowledge that these criticisms exist, surely no research, whether quantitative or qualitative, can claim to present the absolute truth. Therefore, I have 'turned to the things themselves' by observing the children, talking and listening to them, and reading their letters.

3.1.2 Collecting Data: Observing:

In Chapter Three I described the occasions when I met each class of children: first, in the schools during an outreach session²⁰; second, during their visit to the exhibition²¹; and third, back in the schools during an interview. Over the nine month period I made 23 outreach visits out of a total of 30 schools who booked to see the exhibition. All schools were in the Windsor/Maidenhead, Slough, Bracknell and Wokingham Educational Authorities, except 3 which were situated in the Inner London Education Area. I collected interview data from a total of 122 children from 16 of the schools, and children from 17 schools wrote letters to me. Both the interviews and the letters have been transcribed. Class sizes varied, but on average when I divided each class into groups there were never more than 10 children doing the same activity. All the children were between the ages of 7 - 11 years, and were studying ancient Egypt at Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum. However, although my main task was to investigate the children's encounter with the objects, I found I needed to be attentive and

vigilant throughout their experience - from the moment they stepped inside the museum, participated in the activities, and responded to one another, to their teachers and to me. Furthermore, I needed to be conscious of their behaviour as they relived their experience through their interviews. According to van Manen, (1990), it is important to feel closely related to the experience of those who are observed, whilst being able to reflect on significant aspects of their experience which will ultimately contribute to an understanding of its meanings (1990:69).

Unfortunately, though it would have been ideal to observe every class, two factors prevented this. The first factor was the sheer number of children, which meant I had to split each class into three groups and rotate them through the activities. And the second factor was my continuous supervision of the handling session precluding involvement in any other activity. However, when two schools brought only a dozen children I was able to accompany them throughout their visit and collect observations²².

Despite these limitations some photographic evidence was obtained including: images of objects used in the outreach session; the museum context; the objects used in the treasure hunt; the sketching and handling activities; and the children as they took part in their visit²³.

3.1.3 Collecting Data: Listening, Speaking and Interviewing - The Dialogic Scenario:

During every meeting I had with the children I tried to encourage them to look at the objects, ask questions and deduce information for themselves²⁴. Consequently there was always dialogue taking place: for example, during conversations in the outreach session when the children tried to fit pieces of their jigsaw together; when they pointed out certain amazing objects to one another during the treasure hunt; or as they discussed how they felt when they entered one of the darkened rooms ²⁵.

However, although the children's responses were registered during their visits it wasn't possible to teach and make written notes simultaneously. Notwithstanding, comments and questions were recorded in my journals which

influenced the selection of relevant texts. Throughout every interview an audio recording was made using a mini-disc player, in addition to brief written notes about each child interviewee. And, to aid the matching of voices to faces at a later stage of the research process, photographs were taken of each child. All interviews were conducted in the schools, and on every occasion the class teacher chose three or four children at random to be in each interview group.

To help the children feel at ease whilst they were being interviewed, a quiet, familiar space was found to allow them to concentrate and be undisturbed. In addition, to encourage the children to relax and feel comfortable about relating their experiences, the interview normally began with an informal chat about their school and the progress of their ancient Egyptian topic. Then, once they were seated, the children's attention was drawn towards the mini-disc player/recorder (at that time an unfamiliar piece of technology) as another tactic for 'breaking the ice'.

In the process of discussing the interviews in this research I refer to Kvale²⁶ (1996), and Cohen and Manion (1997). Initially, while Kvale (1996:148), suggests that a researcher should be knowledgeable about the topic under investigation, Cohen and Manion reveal:

The preliminary stage of an interview study will be the point where the purpose of the research is decided ... there then may follow the translation of the general goals of the research objectives into the questions that will make up the main body of the schedule. This needs to be done in such a way that the questions adequately reflect what it is the researcher is trying to find out (Cohen and Manion,1997:284).

To find out about the children experience I considered different interview approaches²⁷. However, because I wanted to try to understand the children's individual encounters I chose to adopt a largely unstructured interview procedure which would allow me the flexibility and freedom to respond to children's statements (Cohen and Manion,1997:273). This format gave me the opportunity to ask spontaneous questions, whilst making sure that my underlying objective of covering the three museum activities was realized.

When van Manen discusses interviewing he suggests that one should try to help the interviewee to engage with the experience from the inside out by tapping into the emotions, moods or feelings which characterize it; by asking how the

body felt at that time - for example, how things smelt, sounded or looked is a way in which people can become more in touch with the lifeworld (van Manen,1990:64-65). In my research, for example, I often asked the children how it felt to touch the handling collection.

During interviews it became noticeable that some children wanted to tell me what they had learnt about ancient Egypt, the ancient Egyptians and the objects. Listening to them relate this information was interesting, but unless they were able to tell me how these facts affected them it was not significant for my particular research²⁸. For example, if after experiencing the large mummy case a child related how mummies attended the 'weighing of the heart ceremony' prior to being incarcerated, I would be at a loss to know how this object affected them except on a purely cognitive level. Consequently, I would ask him/her supplementary questions in the hope that they would begin to reveal what this experience felt like. As Kvale says, it is important to ask simple, direct and unambiguous questions (1996:148). The following conversation exemplifies the type of questioning which I tried to adopt:

CO: How did it make you feel when you saw those very old things?

B: Oh I thought that I wouldn't really like to be in a mummy case because it would probably be quite dark and horrible ... (Laughter)

CO: Yes, so they made you feel a little bit, how would you describe what they made you feel like? You said you ...

B: They made me feel quite funny sort of ...

CO: Funny ... a little bit ...

A: Strange.

B: Strange.

CO: Strange. How did you feel about it when you went in there and saw those things?

A: It was kind of like scary, because when I came in it was like mummies were jumping out at, out of cases everywhere, when you first came in to where the mummy cases were. And I liked the masks quite a lot because I liked the patterns on their faces.

Kvale (1996), also advises researchers to take a sensitive approach to the interviewees (1996:149). Though I gradually became familiar with this particular type of questioning, I found I had to adapt to the composition and

dynamics of each group which were all totally different. This meant that it was necessary to be continually resourceful; ensuring that 'flowing' conversations stayed within relevant parameters, and patient when conversations came to a halt. On these occasions some children said they couldn't remember what had happened; others said they found it hard to express their feelings; and some just seemed reticent. When this happened I adopted a deliberately unconcerned approach by waiting; however, if this proved unsuccessful I tried to encourage them by repeating or rephrasing the question. If there was continued difficulty though, I didn't persist.

However, when the children were forthcoming about their feelings we spent longer exploring various aspects of their experience. On these occasions it was important to maintain an interest in what they had to say because, when they were allowed to 'sink more deeply' into their experience, the data became much richer (Becker,1992:38). Although Kvale recommends that interviews should be kept within the parameters of the topic, he also advises researchers to be pragmatic and serendipitous by permitting an interviewee to digress if valuable information is forthcoming(1996:149).

Throughout every interview Kvale (1996), suggests that a critical approach should be taken, in order that supplementary questions can be asked to achieve clarification of what had been said (1996:149). This became a regular feature of the interviews as I was attempting to access the children's expressions of their feelings, to understand how their statements and gestures embodied the pre-reflective sphere of their experience. On the occasions when the children restricted their answers to what happened rather than how they felt, or even how they felt about what happened, I reiterated questions or found supplementary ones.

At the end of one particular interview the children told me how they felt about the process itself. They said:

A: Well, because like, giving out your feelings of the place in such a gr ... depth, it was such a great time there. I just thought it was really nice to share your feelings with everybody else.

C: Well, like A: said, giving out your feelings and expressing yourself so other people know how we felt about it.

D: What everyone was saying about expressing your feelings - we only have to say it in front of a few people, and then because you've been recording it, it can go on to everyone else, and we don't have to stand in front of a big crowd and announce it.

E: Because it's fun just saying what you felt and everything.

These transcripts intimate how the children found it fun to be able to describe their feelings; the intimacy of the group seemed to foster an atmosphere which helped them to be forthcoming about their experiences. Furthermore, by reflecting on their visit in depth they seemed to become aware of aspects which would otherwise have remained hidden. The pedagogical value of self-reflection by revisiting an experience through an interview, was not only evident to me but was regarded as valuable by the children themselves.

Once the interviews were completed I transcribed each one, underlining the words which were emphasized, indicating when there were pauses or silences, and making a note when voices were superimposed or the words were indecipherable. Two transcribed interviews from one school have been included at the end of this chapter.

3.1.4 Collecting Data - Children's Letters:

Although the interviews provided a good, audible source of data, I was able to gain further insight into the children's experiences from the letters which they sent to me after their visit²⁹. The content of these varied ranging from short, basic thank-you notes of only a few sentences, to lengthy paragraphs which included descriptions of the exhibition, and the children's thoughts and feelings about the objects and their visit generally. Reading these letters was a useful way of being reconnected to each particular visit through the children's recollections. However, though many of these letters were insightful and sometimes critical, I was aware that the children had been instructed to write by their teachers, some of whom had asked their classes to express their appreciation to me for organising their visit. On these occasions the letters seemed to follow a set format and the comments tended to be largely positive. The following excerpts show how diverse these letters were, and how they provided another source of information which could be used to probe the deeper meanings of the children's experience.

Thank you for taking us round your museum, I thought it was really good,

and it's really interesting and some parts were quite spooky. I thought the mummified hand was a bit yucky. I can't believe I touched Egyptian things.

When I went into the funeral section I felt like I wanted to explore it. When I held the artefact I felt like an ancient Egyptian myself!

I liked holding the mummy case because it was creepy, because I felt like I was going to be buried. I enjoyed it because it was incredible to see things which were used years ago. In the funeral section I felt a spider would get me. I felt I was lucky to be able to hold a thing which was held thousands of years ago.

Transcribed letters from two schools have been included at the end of this chapter.

3.2 PROCESSING THE DATA:

3.2.1 Being Called by Language - Speaking, Listening and Reading:

Once the data had been collected and transcribed it became clear that if I was to reach an understanding of the children's experiences by analyzing it, I would need to think about language and the way it carries meaning. As I listened over and over again to their voices, read and reread the interview scripts and reflected, I began to appreciate how my interpretations of the children's interpretations fused together.

Jardine(1998), discusses how interpretive research always begins when researchers are struck by an experience which, though it seems familiar and understood, calls out to be investigated. On taking up the challenge they find themselves opening up or generating a fecundity of meanings, which not only make them re-address their previous understanding of the phenomenon, but bring them to a realization that they share a common humanity with those whom they are researching. Quoting and paraphrasing Gadamer, Jardine reveals:

'What emerges' in opening up a conversation with this instance 'is neither mine nor yours', but is that 'in which' we dwell together - the contours of that original familiarity and kinship that made this instance so telling in the first place. 'Understanding is the expression of the affinity of the one who understands to the one whom he understands and to that which he understands'. None of us necessarily knows all by ourselves the full contours of the story each of us is living out. This is why dialogue and conversation figure so predominantly in interpretive work (Gadamer, in Jardine,1998:47).

Throughout this section I want to show that whilst I used creative analytical procedures well-established in phenomenological and qualitative research, I was always mindful of the pivotal role of language, as that interpretive vehicle

which allows the relationship between the different parts of the experience and the experience as a whole, to be understood and communicated.

3.2.2 Examining my Pre-understandings:

Before I began to interpret the meanings of the children's experience however, I needed to make an honest attempt to voice my pre-understandings because, 'the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we want to investigate, but that we know too much'(van Manen,1990:46).

When I began to reflect on my situation vis à vis the children's experience, I considered my thoughts and feelings associated with the differing roles which I performed in the museum. From my background in art history and museum studies, I had developed a compelling interest in ancient Egyptian artefacts from both an æsthetic and an historical point of view. Furthermore, as I worked with the objects day by day I became fascinated by their beauty, and intrigued by the way they stimulated my imagination and curiosity. From my perspective as a museum educator and an art teacher, I was keen to use the activities to give the children a variety of sensuous experiences. And, from a pedagogical point of view, eager to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and *construct*³⁰ their own meanings. However, the consequence of being able to plan a pedagogical programme consistent with my own educational philosophy, meant I was motivated to see it succeed.

Was I prepared for the programme not to succeed? Although I hoped the children would enjoy learning from the objects, there were three school visits which prompted me to question how valuable and appropriate the activities were for children generally. The first concerned children with severe behavioural problems; the second was a group with mental and physical disabilities; and the third was a class which included three wheelchair-bound children with cerebral palsy. The children in the first two groups managed to sketch and handle the objects with their ancillary helpers, but when it came to the treasure-hunt all they could cope with was locating one object. In the third group however, with no wheel-chair access to the upper floors, I made sure

these three children were able to touch the objects by bringing the handling collection down to the ground floor.

Another significant aspect of this experience which contributed to my prejudices, was having the opportunity of combining my educational research with my other two roles. Though this forced me to become adaptable switching from one role to another, I also had the benefit of gaining a more holistic understanding of its varying aspects. However, while enthusiastic about the diversity of my work, I tended to expect the children to share my feelings; it was important therefore, as I reflected on my data, that I was aware that these feelings existed and that they could blind me to the possibility that some children might not share my passion for the subject.

3.2.3 Analyzing the Experience - Thematic Reflection:

Bearing the above in mind I began to read the transcripts and listen to the children's voices. As I became absorbed, I noticed that their statements related to different aspects of their experience. For example, they did not confine themselves exclusively to their encounters with the objects; sometimes they spoke about the museum context; occasionally they mentioned the activities and often they referred to a combination of all three. Clearly, to understand their experiences thoroughly I would need to take every aspect into account. Furthermore, it became increasingly evident that when they expressed their thoughts and feelings, these were not just conceptual but physical/bodily manifestations too. The following quotations exemplify this point:

I liked looking at the head of the cat, Bast or Bastet. It was fascinating looking at the holes in her ears.

I liked the darker room because it made me feel how hot it was in Egypt because it was hotter than the lighter room.

The sketching was hard because of all the hieroglyphs on the pieces we had to sketch.

I went really slowly when I was holding it just in case I slipped.

I also discovered when reading the children's letters that as they did not focus exclusively on their feelings, I needed to be conscious of the different ways in which they described their experience. For example, they would often identify an object or part of the museum, then make a judgment about it and finally say

how it made them feel. Other children would omit their feelings and just comment on what they saw and what they thought. The following statements demonstrate this:

My favourite thing was when we went to see the mask because it was nice to see real ancient Egyptian stuff. I enjoyed it because it was really, really, really old stuff. I felt quite strange when I saw the mummified skeleton and the masks. I felt quite funny when I held the the artefacts because they were used thousands of years ago.

I liked the mummified hand and cat. I really liked the death mask and the mummy cases and I did like the things on the top floor when we had to put the gloves on.

In the first quote the child expresses an appreciation of experiencing authentic, ancient objects, but more than this, he was able to tell me that seeing mummified exhibits made him *feel strange*, and when he held them it made him *feel funny*. The second quote, on the other hand, is far less enlightening: the child says that she valued the experience - she liked the mummified exhibits and being able to touch certain objects, but she didn't tell me what that felt like. I am left wondering.

To organize the data I took advice from Maykut and Morehouse (1994:126-131), and Cohen and Manion (1997:294-296), who suggest that before statements are sorted, cut up, clustered and fixed onto coloured card to denote different categories they should be labelled. This involved writing information about whether the statement was from a letter or an interview; the number of the interview; the page number of the transcription, and the school the child attended. This referencing system proved invaluable, especially when I wanted to contextualize a particular statement and locate the dialogue from which it originated³¹.

Having referenced all the statements I then sorted them into three categories namely: the context; the activities and the objects. The activity category was then subdivided into sketching, treasure-hunting and handling; and the object category was split to take account of the different types of objects. Once I had categorized the statements I then began to look more closely at each individual category, focusing particularly on the statements which told me how the children felt about each aspect of their experience.

3.2.4 Taking a More Careful Look: Discovering Common Themes:

As I read and reread the children's words certain phrases occurred repeatedly.

For example, many of the children said:

Well, sort of like I'd gone back in time and watched all the - saw all the pharaohs and the farmers and the high priests and stuff.

Well, when I was holding the objects someone could have been holding them in exactly the same way as me, so it felt like I was there when they were holding it and ... Back in time ... back in ancient Egypt.

As the children experienced the objects their ancientness affected them; by seeing and touching the surface they seemed transported to ancient Egypt. On the strength of these responses it was evident that this facet of their encounter with the objects was significant, and that it would help me to understand their experience as a whole.

Identifying common themes followed this procedure, however, while there was a mass of data supporting some themes, others which I found just as significant, had relatively few statements. Jardine (1998), endorses this not only by indicating that the individual case can often be fecund with significance, but also by warning against the danger of correlating significance exclusively with the preponderance of common statements (1998:34,38). As I have already mentioned, each child experienced their visit uniquely therefore it was important to respect and value their responses as they contributed to a wider understanding of the phenomenon. Van Manen (1984), discusses the process of reflection and the role which common themes play in our understanding. He explains:

Phenomenological themes are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus experienced as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. It is by the light of these themes that we can navigate and explore such universes (van Manen,1984:40-41,59).

Valle, King and Halling (1989), on the other hand, use a musical metaphor to explain common themes. For them common themes are rather like a melody. To recognise this melody every note needs to be in place otherwise it would no longer be that melody. Thus, there is a distinctive melody or theme to each of our many experiences. 'The structure of a phenomenon is, then, the commonality running through the many diverse appearances of the

phenomenon ... recalling that structure is made present to us as *meaning*' (1989:14).

3.2.5 Further Reflection - Re-thinking about the Common Themes:

By this stage in the analysis I had reduced my data to approximately thirty different themes and a vague picture of the experience seemed to be emerging. But, on reflection, when I reconsidered the themes in relation to the four phenomenological existentials of 'lived-space', 'lived-body', 'lived-time' and 'lived-human relations', I began to see the experience in a more structured way. It was at this stage that the common themes and their subsidiaries really seemed to be consolidated. For example, in the 'lived-human relations' category the common themes which suggested themselves were as follows:

- (i) Being amazed by real objects.
- (ii) Being afraid of objects coming alive.
- (iii) Being afraid of being watched.
- (iv) Feeling lucky, grateful and privileged to have experienced the objects.
- (v) Feeling 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians
- (vi) Feeling admiration for ancient Egyptian skill and craftsmanship.
- (vii) Feeling sad for the dead Egyptians.
- (viii) Feeling a sense of responsibility - being afraid of dropping objects.

Although the themes which have been listed above related to the lived-human relations' existential, there were overlaps with other dimensions of the experience. For example, when the children described how they were afraid of the objects coming alive there were obvious bodily references. They said:

When I went into the black - the one that was very dark and I saw their heads, I thought they were going to come alive and break through the glass ... scary.

First of all when we went in the first room with the mummy case in I thought it was really scary, and there was a real mummy in there and it was going to come alive and grab me.

What is important here is not that the data fitted neatly into one particular theme or another, but that the thematic structure helped me to draw out the meanings of the experience as a whole.

3.3.1 Searching for Meaning:

Although it might appear that the common themes were easily and straightforwardly clustered, that was far from the case. Indeed, I was constantly reflecting and considering what the children *meant* when they used certain words, expressed themselves in a prophetic or *epiphanic* manner, or perhaps found themselves at a loss for words. To help me understand therefore, I would often try to interpret their gestures or body language; use a dictionary to check on the etymological roots of words; and in some cases draw upon other literary sources. The following examples show how I employed these methods.

3.3.2 Being Sensitive to Gestures:

During each handling session I deliberately made light of the objects' fragility to help the children feel comfortable whilst they were handling. However, with some children there often seemed to be a certain awkwardness when they started handling. They would turn the objects around and upside down very gingerly with what I sensed to be nervousness. Although none of them spoke of this, I sensed a real dilemma. Instinctively I felt their apprehension which seemed to signal that investigating and conserving were at odds. To hold a precious object they needed secure, steady hands but, to hold it too securely might result in breaking it and being admonished. Merleau-Ponty(1962), is helpful here by describing embodied or empathic understanding, he says:

I become involved in things with my body, they co-exist with me as an incarnate subject, and this life among things has nothing in common with the elaboration of scientifically conceived objects. In the same way, I do not understand the gestures of others by some intellectual interpretation; communication between consciousnesses is not based on the common meaning of their respective experiences, for it is equally the basis of that meaning. The act by which I lend myself to the spectacle must be recognized as irreducible to anything else. I join it in a kind of blind recognition which precedes the intellectual working out and clarification of the meaning (Merleau-Ponty,1962:185).

This type of gestural communication is something which is felt bodily, taking place like, ' a kind of blind recognition' - an understanding which is implicit in the moment it occurs. While it demonstrates how I understood without thinking about what had happened, 'as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his' (Merleau-Ponty,1962:185), it also represents just one example of the many times in which I used observation as a way of interpreting the meanings of the children's experience. Later when some of the children spoke

about feeling uneasy about handling I discovered that they had indeed felt this dilemma.

3.3.3 Going Back to the Roots - Etymological Searching:

Though one of the most common expressions was of amazement or being stunned by the objects it was difficult to define precisely. To clarify what the children meant when they used these words, definitions and etymological roots were investigated. Both words had origins in Middle English and had comprehensive meanings³². For example, feeling stunned could mean being incapacitated, dazed, surprised, confused, shocked or horrified. Amazement was much the same, and even parts of the word itself - being in a maze - indicate that its use was appropriate for experiencing mysterious objects. But, did these manifestations coincide with the children's gestures and statements?

The following examples show how I was able to tease out the multiple meanings from the children's statements:

Feeling incapacitated: being stopped in one's tracks:

Leading up to them it made you stop straight away.

Feeling incapacitated - being breathless:

I can't even explain it I'm out of breath.

Feeling incapacitated - being speechless:

They made me feel a feeling I've never felt before. I can't really describe it.

Feeling incapacitated - being held captive:

I felt really fascinated because I was holding something which was three thousand years old.

Feeling surprised - wow!

And then we touched them and it was like, wow!

Feeling surprised - eye-opening:

I thought it was really eye-opening.

Feeling confused:

It's like I'm dreaming. So, I rub my eyes to wake myself up because I think I'm in a dream, but I'm already awake and in my school uniform - I just can't believe it, I really can't.

Feeling confused - feeling strange:

It was really weird actually ... it's kind of hard to explain how you feel.

Feeling confused - experiencing variable size:

It made me feel a little shocked because something so big can be bigger than you - the little children - it can be quite shocking for them; it can be shocking for us as well.

Feeling horrified:

You kind of got tingles down your spine to see it. I don't know but it was really strange.

It was evident from these statements and observations of gestures, that the children's amazement showed itself in a variety of embodied ways. In my own experience, when I had first seen these objects I had also stopped in my tracks; stood there with my eyes and mouth wide open, speechless and full of incredulity. I knew intuitively what feeling stunned and amazed really felt like. In other words, listening to the children describe their amazement resonated with my own experience.

Unlike research in the natural sciences which is predicated on proof and the validity of results, human science, 'is validated by lived experience and validates lived experience'(van Manen,1990:27). To be addressed by the familiarity of an experience when one reads or listens to a phenomenological description, and feel moved to say, 'Yes, that's just what it felt like when it happened to me', is a valid way of expressing that common human bond which speaks of the lifeworld. Thus while phenomenology describes how one is oriented to an experience, hermeneutics searches for understanding through dialogue and conversation, believing that meaning is not arrived at absolutely, but referentially and relationally (Smith, in Short,1991:197).

3.3.4 Etymological Meanings:

When words have complex meanings like feeling stunned or amazed there are clearly many different ways in which they manifest themselves, and accordingly these manifestations affect the meanings we attribute to them, as Raymond Williams (1983), reveals³³:

The questions are not only about meaning; in most cases, inevitably they are about meanings. Some people, when they see a word, think the first things to do is to define it. Dictionaries are produced and, with a show of authority ... what is called a proper meaning is attached ... But for words of a different kind, and especially for those which involve ideas and values, it is not only an impossible but an irrelevant procedure ... dictionaries list a range of meanings, all of them current, and it will be the range that matters (Williams,1983:16-17).

However, some words are so overused that we lose touch with the wellspring which originally informed their meanings. Investigating these words by going back to their roots can be helpful; it can show how different contexts can affect the sense of a word, and also that a meaning which has long been associated with a word can be a distortion. For example: when the children used the word fascinating I could tell that they were inquisitive but, when I looked it up in the dictionary I learnt that it came from the Latin verb, *fascinum* which means to charm or put under a spell. My understanding of their statements was thereby enhanced by this meaning; they really did seem entranced or captivated by what they were experiencing.

I thought the kitten that was mummified was fascinating because of the way they wrapped it up.

3.3.4 Seeing Things in a New Light - *Epiphanic* Phrases:

As I read and reread the children's statements certain words seemed to jump out at me from the page. According to van Manen (1997), an *epiphanic* phrase is, 'when a text suddenly speaks out to us, when it suddenly addresses an inner manner that validates our experience' (van Manen, 1997:366-7). Even though the words were familiar the phraseology had a prophetic ring about it which arrested me. As I paused I reconsidered my understanding of the words themselves and what the children really meant. The following examples demonstrate this point:

I think just when you see really old things it makes you go to a mysterious mind, dreams, day-dreams inside your head.

It was hard to believe that I was that person, I felt really weird and cold inside.

It really boosted our knowledge forward for our history topic.

In the first example the boy was so struck by the age of the objects that he began to day-dream. Dreams do indeed happen inside one's head and very often they are quite mysterious, so it seemed rational to describe having a dream as going to a mysterious mind. On this occasion his day-dream took him back to ancient Egypt which was a very mysterious destination indeed.

For the second child, feeling really weird and cold made her feel so strange inside that she couldn't recognise herself - as she said, 'it was hard to believe

she was that person'. We rarely refer to ourselves as 'that person' but, on reflection, when one feels unlike oneself one feels like someone else and not 'me' nor 'I'.

In the final example, when I read the words, 'It really boosted our knowledge forward ...'. I had never thought of using the word 'boosted' in conjunction with the word 'knowledge', because the word 'boosted' seemed redolent of rockets. Did the child mean that the visit had helped the class gain a more immediate understanding of ancient Egyptian history? These *epiphanic* phrases helped me appreciate how the children were feeling, and piece together further parts of the phenomenological jigsaw puzzle.

3.3.5 Searching for Understanding - Literary Enlightenment:

On a few occasions when I was searching for a deeper understanding of the children's descriptions, I found it very useful to turn to a variety of literary sources. Both van Manen and Bollnow recommend drawing on stanzas from poems, accounts of lived-experience, and passages from fiction (van Manen, 1990:71) and (Bollnow, in Vandenberg,1997:193). For example, some of the children told me that although they felt 'scared' and 'spooked out' in the darkened galleries amongst the weird and wonderful exhibits, they also felt a compelling curiosity to explore. This reminded me of a passage in C.S. Lewis's novel, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, when, at the start of the adventure Lucy, an evacuee, finds a mysterious winter wonderland concealed within a wardrobe in her temporary wartime home. Lewis writes:

Lucy felt a little frightened but she felt very inquisitive and excited as well ... 'I can always get back if anything goes wrong', thought Lucy. She began to walk forward, crunch, crunch over the snow ... (Lewis,2000:10-13).

The children in the museum seemed to experience a similar dilemma. In two short lines from the poem, *The Sparrows Nest*, Wordsworth encapsulates the essence of this feeling; He writes, 'She looked at it and seemed to fear it; / Dreading, tho'wishing, to be near it:'(Wordsworth,1996:2). As I read these words I understood phenomenologically what these ideas felt like³⁴. Emmeline, Wordsworth's sister, though attracted by the bright blue eggs in the bird's nest, was anxious about touching them. Perhaps she anticipated that the sparrow might return and attack her, or maybe she feared she might break them

through clumsiness; whatever her reasons one can picture her like the children, moving indecisively forwards and backwards. For Lucy and some of the children, excitement and curiosity got the better of them and they moved on; Wordsworth's poem is inconclusive and we are left wondering³⁵.

4 WRITING:

4.1 Writing Over and Over Again:

When I started writing I knew that ultimately I wanted to produce a text which showed an insightful understanding of the experiential meanings of children's encounters of ancient Egyptian objects. I also hoped it would be helpful to teachers of primary school children, museum educators and curators. Van Manen (1990), tells how texts which speak or resonate with us can elicit what Buytendijk called the 'phenomenological nod':

In one of his lectures Buytendijk once referred to the 'phenomenological nod' as a way of indicating that a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience - is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience (van Manen,1990:27).

To write in a truly phenomenological way then, would mean working with the text to find a tone which would let its poetic or felt meanings dawn as it was read³⁶. Van Manen describes phenomenological research as a *poetizing* activity because, 'it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling ... language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it ... as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the world (van Manen,1990:13). To be suddenly grasped intuitively or *epiphanically* by the text helps readers feel and think differently about themselves; as Bachelard says, 'It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being'(Bachelard,1994:xxiii).

Although this chapter describes the method of investigating the children's experience, it would be wrong to assume that the process was mechanical and that the writing stage marked the end of the process. On the contrary, reading, listening, reflecting and writing have been integrated creatively throughout. Indeed, I found that engaging with the children's statements or the common

themes at any time would often spark off a fresh understanding of the phenomenon.

However, what was particularly helpful about the writing stage, was the way it helped me to really focus on the experience; to ask again, ‘What is it like to encounter ancient Egyptian objects from a child’s perspective?’, and to try to relate the themes to one another and yet see the whole as a meaningful picture. This meant I had to be constantly sensitive to the language I used as I searched for a sense of resonance and insight. Van Manen’s advice is useful here; he says, ‘To write is to stir oneself as reader. It is tempting to simply conceive of the mantic meaning of a text as the emotive or feeling dimension of language, but it is a mistake to distinguish too strongly between feelings and understandings, ideas and emotions’(van Manen,1997:367).

From the above I have tried to show not only how the children’s gestures and statements helped me understand their experience, but how their silences and pauses told me a great deal too. In those moments when they were unable to speak, or found it difficult to express themselves, I tried hard to tune in to their difficulty. Meaning was therefore in the spaces in between the words as well as in the words themselves.

After several attempts at writing, I decided to try to give the reader a real sense of what it was like to experience a visit to the Myers Museum (See Chapter Five). To achieve this I needed to include aspects of the teacher’s and the children’s arrival at school; their journey to Eton; being welcomed at the museum; their participation in the activities; their return journey to school, their discussion of their visit, to writing an account of their experience. Assuming the role of a fictional teacher, I used my own teaching experience, observational data and the children’s statements to describe the atmosphere and the events of that day, and in the process attempted to record and comment on my own feelings as well as the children’s.

4.2 Writing - Approaching Understanding:

Once this chapter was written I began to consider interpreting the experience using a thematic approach to complement the narrative. At this stage I took a

fresh look at the common themes and was able to gain a much more insightful grasp of how they seemed to fit together; moreover, while some themes seemed quite dominant, others remained subsidiary. For example, in the 'lived-space' dimension, the children described how they felt scared of the dark, but the way they expressed themselves led to two specific themes namely: feeling entombed, trapped or buried; and feeling scared and yet excited³⁷.

When I attempted to reach a deeper understanding of these structures, I had to muster all my resources. The object of this project had not been to conceptualize the experience or dispel its mystery, but rather to bring the mystery more fully into the reader's presence. This meant making use of language to present what is inherently pre-linguistic and therefore essentially not transposable, into a set of precisely delineated propositional statements (van Manen,1984:49).

5. Going One Step Further - Relating Research to Primary Education:

Throughout this research journey I tried to gain an insightful understanding of the structure of primary school children's encounters of ancient Egyptian objects. Having moved towards an understanding of the experiential meanings it was important to apply this knowledge to pedagogy as it related to the teaching of primary history and museum education. Bollnow's (1969), categorical phase endorses this procedure, as explained above. To do this I would need to comment on each pedagogical domain; draw upon the common themes and demonstrate how they impinged upon these domains; and finally explain how these particular phenomenological findings contributed something original to educational knowledge or theory³⁸. It was not enough merely to describe and interpret the children's experience, I needed to go one step further. As Vandenberg (1997), explains, 'the conceptual formulation of a phenomenological description is a necessary element of an educational theory ... anything worthy of being called 'theory' or 'philosophical' has to be conceptual, but the whole point of a phenomenological approach is to wed this theorizing to the things themselves' (1997:201).

By describing this hermeneutic phenomenological method, I have attempted to show how I oriented to my research as a curatorial assistant, museum teacher

and student; how I tried to feel with the children in a sensitive and yet rigorous way throughout this research journey; and how the process helped me glimpse my destination as I interpreted the embodied aspects of their experience by bringing it to speech. The process of taking it one step further by relating it to educational theory and practice, has been an attempt to valorize both its findings and the hermeneutic phenomenological method.

Notes:

1. Kuhn (1962), first introduced the concept of the paradigm in his work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Although he applied it to the history and sociology of science, it has been adapted to apply to all disciplines as a philosophical framework which underpins the relationship between thinking practices and knowledge.

2. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), trace the five distinctive moments of qualitative research.

The traditional period (1900 -1950) is associated with the positivist paradigm. The modernist or golden age (1950 - 1970) and blurred genres moment (1970 - 1986) are connected to the appearance of postpositivist arguments. At the same time, a variety of new interpretive, qualitative perspectives made their presence felt, including hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, cultural studies and feminism. In the blurred genres phase the humanities became central resources for critical, interpretive theory, and the qualitative research project was broadly conceived. The blurred genres phase produced the next stage, the crisis of representation (1986 - 1990), where researchers struggled with how to locate themselves and their subjects in reflexive texts. The postmodern moment (1990 - present), is characterized by a new sensibility that doubts all previous paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln,1994:2).

3. Maykut and Morehouse (1994), link quantitative research to a positivist paradigm or methodological framework. Within this methodology a researcher would aim to abstract reality as a way of understanding and controlling objects in the world. And, by taking a purely objective or value-free position would seek an efficient, certain and predictable position whereby causal links and generalizations could be shown, thereby proving or disproving a hypothesis and validating the research. Numerical analysis and statistics are often characteristic of this type of research (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:12). In short, they make the case for choosing a positivist paradigm to substantiate a position, unlike a phenomenological paradigm which seeks merely to understand a phenomenon better. Because both methodologies can employ the same methods (for example: interviewing and observation) the rigid demarcation between the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research cannot be sustained. As Denzin and Lincoln say, 'within differing paradigms the methods used just tell a different kind of story' (Denzin and Lincoln,1994:5).

4. Dilthey's (1985), explanation of 'lived experience' is cited by van Manen:

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective (Dilthey, in van Manen,1990:35).

Thus, the 'lifeworld' which is experienced pre-reflectively, is the subject of our lived experience which accordingly is objectified in consciousness and awareness.

5. Because the roots of ethnography lie in anthropology, ethnographers seek to understand people in social settings, and as such immerse themselves in these 'natural' settings whilst studying them. The views and perceptions of the people who take part in these settings are therefore crucial. In his definition of ethnography, Hammersley says: 'the search for universal laws is rejected in favour of detailed descriptions of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the social rules that constitute it' (Hammersley, 1992:8).

6. Hermeneutic phenomenology is similar to ethnography in that the researcher both studies and is part of an everyday social setting; however, while he/she is interested in observing and listening to the people who are being researched, it is with a view to trying to understand what their particular lived experience feels *like*, rather than extrapolating the social rules which underpin it. The questions posed in this case will attempt to discover both the reflective and non-reflective spheres of this experience, and establish how they inform an embodied understanding of the experience in spatial, temporal, corporeal and relational terms.

7. For an explanation of interventionist exhibitions see Chapter 1, Note 10.

8. Under the heading, Knowledge and Understanding, of The National Curriculum for Art at Key Stage 2, pupils should be taught:

a) visual and tactile elements, including colour, pattern and texture, line and tone, shape, form and space.

b) materials and processes used in making art, craft and design.

c) differences and similarities in the work of artists, craftspeople and designers in different times and cultures [for example, Western Europe and the wider world]. An example of art from another tradition is: 'Ancient Egyptian wall painting' (QCA,1999:120).

In The National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 2, children are encouraged to undertake a world history study of a past society. This should include the everyday lives of men, women and children, of a past society selected from: Ancient Egypt, Ancient Sumer, the Assyrian Empire, the Indus Valley, the Maya, Benin, or the Aztecs (QCA,1999:107).

In an earlier version of The National Curriculum History Syllabus, Unit 10 is devoted to the ancient Egyptians, and is entitled: 'What can we find out about ancient Egypt from what has survived?' (QCA,1998:1-4).

9. The phrase 'really like' is often used in common parlance to draw special attention to the existential qualities of a particular experience, thereby emphasizing its meaning. In this particular context it is used as a way of expressing what it was like for the children to experience ancient Egyptian objects. However, in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, I acknowledge that it can never be possible to know exactly what it is like or 'really like' for someone else to have an experience because we are all uniquely positioned historically and culturally (See Gadamer's, theory of the 'Fusion of Horizons' below (1975:271-273). In Merleau-Ponty's (1962), phenomenological thesis he explains how perception of the 'real' occurs pre-reflectively when the body is at one with the world; awareness of the 'real' can never be the 'real' because, once we become conscious we are conscious of a representation of the 'real' as reality and not the 'real' itself. Thus, while this study tries to understand a particular children's experience, I am well aware that I will only be *approaching* an understanding of what it is 'really like'; partly, because it is never possible for us to know exactly what it is like to be a child having an experience; and partly because knowing what is 'real' rather than reality is also never possible.

Included in Yi Fi Tuan's (1977), book, *Space and Place*, is a chapter on 'Space, Place and the Child', which has many insights into what it might be like for a new-born infant to experience the world and gradually make sense of it. Noting how difficult it is for an adult to gain entry into the world of a child as Meyer-Drawe (1986), and Lippitz (1986), mentioned above, Yi Fi Tuan comments:

This inability, for most people, to recapture the mood of their own childhood world suggests how far the adult's schemata, geared primarily to life's practical demands, differ from those of the child. Yet, the child is father to the man, and the child's perceptual categories are from time to time infused with emotions which surge out of early experiences. These highly charged moments from the past are sometimes captured by poets. Like candid snapshots out of the family album their words recall for us a lost innocence and a lost dread, an immediacy of experience that had not yet suffered (or benefited) from the distancing of reflective thought (Tuan, 1977:19-20).

Thus, because a purely objective understanding of a child's experience will never be possible, I will attempt to come close to the child's experience through a mediated understanding. Making my prejudices and values explicit as a way of understanding my position is therefore an important aspect of a hermeneutic phenomenological method. See pp. 174-175 for an account of my particular prejudices or pre-understandings.

10. This particular seminar for research students, was taught by Dr. Rose Montgomery-Whicher at the Institute of Education, University of London in 1998. It specifically focused on Hermeneutic Phenomenology, and was one of a series of nine whose collective title was 'Qualitative Analysis for Social and Educational Enquiry'.

11. See Note 9 above for the limitations of this research.

12. While many research methodologies aim to predict, explain and even suggest ways of controlling experience, hermeneutic phenomenology as human science attempts to gain an understanding of the pre-reflective and reflective spheres of a particular lived experience. By, 'looking to the things themselves', as Husserl advises, this precludes the necessity to explain, predict or control them (van Manen, 1990:9). An awareness of being as existence is a psychical fact, therefore, this psychical fact can never be the cause of another psychical fact (Merleau-Ponty, in Valle, King and Halling, 1989:13).

Though van Manen is quite clear about the parameters which define hermeneutic phenomenology as a human science, he is not blind to its critics who claim that it is, 'just too fuzzy, too ambiguous, inadequately based on observational and measurable data, not replicable, poorly generalizable to definite populations, irrational, unscientific, subjectivist and so on' (1990:15-16). Roger Scruton (1994), states in *Modern Philosophy*: 'Phenomenology has never succeeded in justifying itself to its critics' satisfaction. In particular, it has never shown how a study of what is 'given' to consciousness can lead us to the essence of anything at all' (1994:11).

However, because human consciousness is both reflection and reflective, it becomes second nature not merely to ask what things are and *how* they are, but what these things *mean*. Explaining the rationale which underpins hermeneutic phenomenology van Manen (1990), reveals:

The answer depends on the criteria of rationality that one applies to the human sciences. If the criteria are the same as those that govern the natural sciences then the human sciences many seem rather undisciplined. But those criteria do not have the same meaning, of course, otherwise there would be no essential difference between the human and the natural sciences. The point is that the constraints of meaning on the criteria or standards of science define the horizons and pose the limits on what we can study and how we can rationalize the research as being scientific. The meaning of human science notions such as 'truth, method, understanding, objectivity, subjectivity, valid discourse', and the meaning of 'description, analysis, interpretation, writing, text', etc. are always to be understood within a certain rational perspective ... Human science philosophers have argued that notions of 'truth and understanding' in the human sciences require a

broadening of the notion of rationality(e.g. Gadamer, 1975; Ricour,1981) ... Human science is rationalistic in that it operates on the assumption that human life may be made intelligible, accessible to human *logos* or reason, in a broad or full embodied sense ... Rationality expresses a faith that we can share this world, that we can make things understandable to each other, that experience can be made intelligible. But a human science perspective also assumes that lived human experience is always more complex than the result of any singular description, and that there is always an element of the ineffable to life (van Manen,1990:15).

Effectively then hermeneutic phenomenology does not set out to solve problems, but it does try to establish how the significance of the phenomenon under review can inform future thoughts and actions within certain situations (van Manen, 1990:23). See Chapter 7 for a discussion of some of the aspects of the children's experience which have relevance for primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.

To recapitulate, though human science is conducted within its own criteria for rigour, precision and exactness, it is not an empirical analytic science; it does not enter into speculative inquiry; it is neither particularity nor universality; it does not problem solve; and its questions are meaning questions rather than questions which demand explanations (van Manen, 1990:17,21-24).

13. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is based on finding meaning in everyday experiences. To that end 'it encourages a certain attentive awareness to the details and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday educational lives. It makes us thoroughly aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted' (van Manen, 1990:8).

14. In Plato's *Theætetus* (c.429-347 BC), Socrates relates a Homeric story about wonder being the root of all philosophy, and explains that it is this state of wonderment which is experienced as a form of suffering which inspires the student with a passion to discover meaning and understanding. In the process of this discovery the wonderer is changed as he/she assimilates new understanding. See Chapter 2 pp.61-64 for a discussion of wonder.

15. Vandenberg (1992), (1997), explains that while van Manen uses the term human science interchangeably with the terms phenomenology and hermeneutics, he tends to restrict its use to the methodologies of Dutch and German authors who have written on the phenomenology of education. However, he does accept that symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology, ethnography, ethnomethodology, and critical theory are human sciences too (Vandenberg,1992:119). When critiquing van Manen's text, *Researching Lived Experience* (1990), Vandenberg also takes issue with his translation of *Geisteswissenschaften* as 'human sciences'. Though I take his point that a basic translation of *wissenschaften* can mean science as a body of knowledge of the natural sciences, it can also mean a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject (Pearsall and Hanks, 2001:1664). Citing Dilthey, van Manen substantiates his interpretation and working definition of *Geisteswissenschaften*, he suggests:

The proper subject matter for *Geisteswissenschaften* is the human world characterized by Geist - mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts and institutions. Thus at the risk of oversimplification one might say that the difference between natural science and human science resides in what it studies: natural science studies 'objects of nature', 'things' 'natural events', and 'the way that objects behave'. Human science, in contrast, studies 'persons', or beings that have 'consciousness' and that 'act purposefully' in and on the world creating objects of 'meaning' that are 'expressions' of how human beings exist in the world (van Manen,1990:3-4).

Throughout this study I adhere to this definition of 'human science' with the proviso that it implies the study of human experience from a phenomenological perspective. And where van Manen applies it to pedagogy, I interpret it as the study of being with other people's children in educational settings.

16. Warnke explains how being is synonymous with understanding:

In *Being and Time* the real question was already not how being can be understood, but how being is understanding ... this distinctive feature of Dasein or human life for Heidegger is that ... in living human beings relate themselves interpretively to their lives, that they understand themselves in a continuous process of self-interpretation, experience and reinterpretation ... this circle of interpretation indicates that 'being itself is time' (Warnke, 1987:38).

Acknowledging that being is ontologically fundamental to understanding, suggests that every interpretation will be particular and therefore subject to the historical and cultural factors which condition it. In consequence, knowledge is always personally constructed and accordingly the orthodoxy of epistemology always questionable.

17. I also cite the phenomenological work of Greene (1997), Langeveld (1984), Lippitz (1986), and Meyer-Drawe (1986), in this text.

18. See Chapter 3 for Bollnow's educational research into the *Pedagogical Atmosphere* (1989), which, like van Manen (1990, 1991), takes a similarly holistic view of the child.

19. Throughout the course of this study my principal aim has been to work towards an understanding of primary school children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects. However, with the advent of reading more phenomenological studies which have contributed to educational research, I now see the need to relate my findings to primary pedagogical practice, museum education and primary history. See Chapter 7 for the educational implications of this study.

20. For a description of the outreach sessions and illustrations of the objects and jigsaws which were used during those sessions, see Appendix III, and pp.147 - 150.

21. For a description of the museum activities and illustrations of the treasure hunt objects and the handling collection, see Appendix III, and pp.103 - 107.

22. Due to my teaching responsibilities no observations notes were made of these two sessions.

23. See pp. 219 -225 for illustrations of two classes of children as they took part in their museum activities; and p.102 for a floor plan of the museum.

24. This type of active experiential or discovery learning resonates largely with the ideas of constructivism which has been discussed at length in Chapter 3. See pp. 134 - 136.

25. See below for transcriptions of two interviews from a school which visited the museum.

26. See Chapter 1 Note 36 for a discussion of these factors as they related to the analysis of data from the exhibition, time machine.

27. Cohen and Manion (1997), define four types of interviews. The structured interview determines the content and procedure in advance including specific questions and is a closed system; the unstructured interview allows freedom and flexibility whereby the interviewer responds more spontaneously to the interviewee, frames the questions

accordingly while still having an underlying objective in mind; the non-directive interview is more geared to therapeutic situations where there are no set questions or framework; and the focused interview concentrates on an experience which has previously been analyzed by the interviewer in order to ask relevant questions (Cohen and Manion,1997:273-274).

28. Though the cognitive aspect of the children's responses was always evident in their language, when they revealed how they *felt* I was able to gain an insight into the pre-reflective sphere of their experience. It is perfectly possible to have feelings about cognitive experiences - for example, when one feels elated when an obscure theory becomes intelligible; however, what one is questing after here is not the content of the theory or the fact that it is intelligible, but the feelings which characterize what it is like to experience an understanding of the theory. See Chapter 1 p.43 for a discussion of the limitations of using the video data from the exhibition time machine.

29. See below for transcriptions of children's letters from two schools which visited the museum.

30. For a description of the constructivist approach to learning described by George Hein, see pp. 132 -134 in Chapter 3.

31. The reason why I used this particular method of analyzing the data rather than using the SPSS software, is simply because every analysis is individual, consequently a predetermined set of criteria could never replicate another person's criteria.

32. I have used The New Oxford Dictionary of English (Pearsall and Hanks,2001) for exploring the etymological sources of words.

33. Raymond Williams's (1983), text, *Keywords*, has been very useful throughout this study for explaining how the meanings of words evolve over time and are dependent on the cultural interpretations which people give them. That is to say words have histories which are culturally and socially constructed.

34. Valle, King and Halling quote Albert Einstein's thinking process which would seem to resonate with the idea of felt meanings - pre-reflective sensing followed later by language. He says:

The words of the language as they are written or spoken do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images ... these elements are, in my case, of a visual and in some of a muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage (Einstein, in Valle, King and Halling,1989:10).

35. Greene (1997), writes about how literary texts can help us understand phenomenologically. She gives great credence to the imagination in the way that it helps us draw on our memories and yet take us beyond. She explains:

And what is imagination? It is the capacity to look at things as if they could be otherwise; the ability to summon up 'as/if' worlds; the power to look through the windows of the actual into some alternative 'reality'. Perhaps most significantly, it is the ability to look questioningly and critically at the natural attitude. It is the ability to break out of one-dimensionality or confinement to a single mode of seeing and sense-making (Greene,1997:174).

36. 'Felt meanings' are described by the poet, Karl Shapiro. He said:

As you say (not without sadness), poets don't see they feel. And that's why

people who have turned to feelers seem like poets. Why children seem poetic. Why when the sap rises in the adolescent heart the young write poetry ... Yet poetry isn't feeling with the hands ... Poems are what ideas feel like ... (Shapiro, in van Manen, 1997:367).

37. The article, 'Analyzing Phenomenological Descriptions', by Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker and Mulderij, (1983), was particularly helpful by describing how common themes are identified and how they relate to subsidiary themes.

38. The paper by Smith entitled, 'The Phenomenology of Educating Physically', was particularly helpful by demonstrating how phenomenological insights can be applied to a specific educational domain (Smith, in Vandenberg, 1997:119-144).

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF TWO INTERVIEWS FROM SCHOOL M - YEAR 6

The key below applies to the interviews which follow:

Key

// indicates overlapping speech: (.) (..) (...) pauses of increasing length:

(Pause) indicates silence: underlined words indicate emphasis or stress:

oooooooo indecipherable speech.

First Interview : 3-7-2000

CO: So, first of all A: if you would like to kick off and tell me what was it like when you first went into the museum when you first arrived?

A: When I first went into the museum it was, because there was only two things and it was lighted up properly it was like, I don't know, strange first of all.

CO: Can you tell me, can you tell me a bit more about why, not why it was strange, but could you tell me a bit more about that strange feeling?

A: Well, because, just thinking it was from Egypt and things like that were three thousand years old, when that things like that would be easy to make today but not in that style.

CO: So, do you mean you were interested to know about the skills of the ancient Egyptians because it was so long ago, and that made you feel strange?

A: Yeah.

CO: B: tell me about. . .

B: I thought it was hard to believe how old it was, and that it was kind of there and you'd still got it, (.) and sort of the black walls, I think that helped the atmosphere; because if it had been all bright and sunny I don't think it would have been so amazing.

CO: So the black walls helped the atmosphere. Could you tell me a bit more about that. That's what we were hoping.

B: Because you think of a tomb being kind of dark and all that stuff being sort of in it, so I guess you kind of think you're trying to recreate it slightly.

C: And with the lights it lights it up and it's like just the angles.

A: And it looks good.

CO: So, in a way, this gave maybe a good contrast . . . and that made you focus on it perhaps a bit more.

B: Yeah, more concentration.

CO: What about you?

C: It would be really amazing . . . that they were so old and that they - people so, that long ago that they had those skills of making, like binding gold and how to make them and how well they'd been preserved and that.

CO: Did you think they were well preserved?

ALL: Yeah, oh yeah.

CO: What did you think about the base of the statue? You know we had those feet in pink granite, do you remember? What was that like when you looked at that?

A: First of all I thought it was just a thing, it wasn't from ancient Egypt, it was just like there to be admired, it wasn't from ancient Egypt at all.

CO: Ah.

C: But when you got closer you saw the hieroglyphs.

A: Round the bottom and the hieroglyphs and the cartouche, so to say it was like a king or a pharaoh even.

CO: What about you, B: what did you think about the statue?

B: I didn't think it was ancient I thought it had just sort of been put there to show sort of, like the height of a statue or something then, because of the size of the feet. It definitely didn't look very old though.

CO: No you didn't think . . .

A: Because it was next to a plant (Laughter) it didn't actually, a bit sort of hidden.

CO: So the plant made you . . .

A: Sort of think about modern because I didn't exactly think the plant was ancient Egyptian either.

C: Like a massive paper-weight. (Laughter)

CO: Yes, I know what you mean, yes, massive, yes, a lot of paper under that very, very heavy it was. So, the atmosphere then downstairs you felt was appropriate and it was rather too like . . .

C: It was good for what was in that room; because if you had like the same in one of the middle rooms I don't think it would have given that much as it did in the bottom, because it was, the stuff was in a tomb it was lit up it looks like.

CO: Yes, because the mummy case would have been in a tomb and the mummy masks would have been in a tomb, the statue probably would have stood outside a tomb or outside a temple, but certainly the mummy case and the masks would

have actually been in a tomb so it was right to have that sort of lighting, wasn't it?

A: When you first went in it gave the right atmosphere, so like you wanted to see more.

C: It was like stepping into Egyptian time and you're in like in a tomb and you're looking around.

CO: You said it made you want to see more; // Yeah // it made you want to go upstairs.

A: Yeah, because it had the right sort of atmosphere to make you want to go on, like just for a first room that was really good.

CO: So, it was like, was it like a foretaste, it was something like a little hors d'oeuvre to the exhibition, you know?

C: A little taster.

CO: Little taster, and then you wanted to explore the rest.

B: Yeah.

CO: So when you went upstairs, up into that room where most of the objects were, what - how did that feel when you went up there?

C: Well, when you first looked into the room what hit me first, you know the statue was right in front of your face...

CO: The coffin.

C: Yeah.

CO: Yes.

C: I thought that was really eye-opening. It's a shame that it was cut in half and that. It was really nice because it was lit up too, so...

A: And it was really different from the first room, it was like really different.

CO: How was it different?

A: Because (.) it didn't have black walls and like special lighting; in there, they were mostly tiny objects which, when you went to the cards you thought things were like, oh, that looks really big because C: had a card, it had this head on it and it turned out to be about this big. (Indicates with her hands)

C: I was looking for ages and ...

CO: Was it a good treasure hunt?

C: It was actually amazing that they could make such little objects with loads of detail. There was little statues like this big. (Indicates with his fingers)

A: They had loads and loads of detail on them.

B: Yeah, I had a little statue that was an inch and a half big and I had to actually, had to draw it off the card when you had to draw it on your paper, because I couldn't see sort of all the detail because it was so small.

CO: Were the cards good then?

A: Yeah, because they were blown up and looked bigger.

CO: So how did it feel when you were . . . I mean, you said just now that the detail was quite amazing, how did you feel when you were in that first room because that was much brighter than the other room, you know? How did you feel when you were looking at those objects in that room, because there were lots of them, weren't there?

A: Yeah, it was a bit like (.) you thought sometimes like I haven't got enough time to look around all of these because first of all I didn't notice the second room attached to it with the mummified hand and things, I just looked around that room. And then people started sort of disappearing, and I was like, where are they all going? And then I noticed that door and everybody's voices were coming from it, so I went in there.

CO: What was it like in there?

A: It was sort of a bit tingling with seeing the mummified hand with all its details, because it wasn't rotting at all, it was just in that hand shape.

CO: So it was a bit tingly. That's interesting.

A: Hum.

CO: So when you said it was a bit tingling, can you explain that a bit more?

B: It's a bit freaky really, isn't it, that some Egyptian . . . person?

A: Like three thousand years old and it's still like all detailed there.

B: And it was very little as well, I mean it had probably shrunk, but they probably had quite a small hand to start with compared to us.

C: Because they were probably still young, because as they, as you know they died when they were not that old.

A: It was just the detail was amazing, it was like - there.

B: The atmosphere in there was quite incredible as well actually.

A: That was dark as well.

B: There was three of us left in there, and M: walked accidentally sort of brushed next to a plant, and S: turned round, she didn't know what it was and she screamed. (Laughter)

A: It was just, it was dark in there - it seemed like there were only three lights in there or something.

CO: Although the objects were lit up, weren't they? Yes, it was meant to be quite dark in there.

A: It was, it was - it set the atmosphere for the after-life as well being dark.

B: Hum - yes.

CO: It set the atmosphere for the after-life; aha.

C: It was scary because there was one - two cabinets joined together like that, and

there were heads in it, and I was walking past them and I was the only person in the room and their eyes like, followed you, were all over you - and it was pretty, scary.

B: Oh, yes as you walked past and they started following you.

A: Yeah, and it's like - first of all you look at them and you think they are just staring and then you walk one way and it looks like they've moved their eyes to where you're standing, and then you move another way and they've moved their eyes again or something.

CO: How did that feel when they were following you around the room?

A: Because it was darker it was a bit . . .

B: Quite scary.

A: What's happening?

B: It was like its so old and I'm here and its watching me - OK. (Laughter)

CO: So was that a bit freaky, a bit tingly, did you feel tingly when you were looking at that, or was that a different feeling, was it?

A: That was a different feeling.

CO: The mummy masks - that was a different feeling.

B: Yeah, it sort of sent shivers down your spine, you looked at it and thought about it, and you know, obviously they weren't watching you, but when you sort of came to that conclusion it sort of like makes you do that. (Shudders) Do you know what I mean?

C: It's a bit weird as well, like we're looking at it and probably like three thousand years old, three thousand years ago like, an Egyptian person would be looking at it . . .

B: Because they'd be making it.

A: Or just making it.

C: And now we're looking at it.

CO: So the object in a way is like a bridge between now and . . .

ALL: Then.

CO: So it's acting really like a bit of a bridge so that . . .

A: Just because it's really old and it's been preserved so well it just doesn't look three thousand years old, but when you think of it like that it's a bit freaky.

CO: So, were there any other feelings that you had about being on that floor that you'd like to tell me about before we go up on to the top floor, and talk about the handling? Was there anything else about that floor, where you saw all the other objects?

A: When the jewellery - to think of an Egyptian lady or man would be wearing that three thousand years ago, was a bit amazing.

B: Yeah.

C: That they could walk with it all on. (Laughter)

A: Yeah, because they weigh so much.

CO: How did it make you feel about, when saw the jewellery there, how did it make you feel about the ancient Egyptians? You know you said the jewellery might have been quite heavy. But did it make you feel any ...

A: It made me think differently because first of all I didn't really think they wore much jewellery, maybe the odd ring or an odd necklace or something, but mostly it was just garments, but seeing all that made me sort of think differently, like maybe they wore two rings or three ...

CO: So it changed your opinion of what they might have been like.

A: Yeah.

CO: Ah, right. What was your favourite object on that floor?

C: I liked the funerary boat because you showed us the slide and I thought it was going to be about this big. (Indicates with his hands) When I walked into the room it was like on the shelf and it was massive.

B: I liked some of the rings and things. I liked the blue as well so ...

CO: The faience. How did it make you feel when you saw things for real, that you'd seen either in books or on the slides that I brought?

B: Oh that was amazing because when it's in a book you just think not many people get a chance to see this ...

C: But we saw it for ourselves.

B: Yeah, it's really nice, and then you go and see it ... it's like, I've seen this ...

A: And when it's on the slides you just think, you can't really (.) imagine that you're going to see that thing, because in slides and books, they don't look real, and so it's just like ...

C: They don't give you such a big atmosphere.

A: Yeah, they just tell you about it and it's not as good as when you actually see it in real life and things, and people tell you about it or something ...

CO: Right, right. So when we went up onto the top floor and we did the handling, tell me what it was like to be actually touching ancient Egyptian objects rather than just seeing them.

A: That was really good, that was my favourite part of all of it.

B: Yeah, it was just hard to believe that you were just like ...

A: Like touching something, I mean people look at things in museums and think, wow this is three thousand years old, but when you are actually touching something three to four thousand years old it's like, oh my god, this can't be real.

B: It's like a massive privilege really, I think.

CO: Yeah, what object did you touch actually, what was it?

A: It was the shabti figure.

CO: Oh, right.

A: The blue shabti figure that went in the tomb, and I was a bit like, I can't believe this came out of a tomb...

C: Next to a mummy.

A: Yeah, that served them in the after-life.

CO: Did that, when you thought about where it came from, did that make you think about it differently, or did that make you feel about it differently?

A: It made me think about it differently, because, just being in a tomb and tombs normally well, they do hold mummies, and those are just really old and they're preserved and everything.

CO: So actually touching something that might have been next to a dead body or whatever...

A: A mummy yeah, from ancient Egypt was a bit like, this might have been next to a mummy, so that was pretty amazing.

CO: How about you, B?

B: I had the canopic jar lid and that was amazing actually like, because someone's insides had been in the jar of that, and it was loads bigger than I expected it to be.

CO: Was it?

B: Yeah.

A: I thought canopic jars were only about this big. (Indicates with her hands).

B: Yeah, they're like, I thought they were that size and the lid's about that size, yeah. (Indicates with her hands) And I wasn't sure what it was made of because it sort of it felt like wood and then it was quite heavy and different parts of it didn't feel the same so ...

A: You're quite into canopic jars anyway, ever since you made one.

CO: Oh, that's interesting, yeah. So it was actually quite a good object for you to touch really; and you were surprised about the size of it and the weight of it, and everything. What was the object you touched?

C: I had, you know the cat's head.

CO: Oh, right, right.

C: That was (.) it was (Pause) It's hard to explain it really. (Laughter) It's yeah, it's (.) we were so privileged to hold something what was so old, that some ancient Egypt... Egyptian person would have held thousands of years ago. It's amazing really.

CO: So was the touching - how would you rate it of all the experiences you had in the museum, which experience was the best for you?

C: Oh, it would be (.) the handling, // Yes, definitely. // that like one of a chance, of a life-time experience to hold and touch.

A: Because, when you told us when we were down on the ground floor, like on the second floor you'll have a treasure hunt, I didn't expect that floor to be like that, and then we'll handle some actual ancient Egyptian objects, that was a big blow - sort of like handling ancient objects.

CO: It was a big blow.

A: Yeah, because I didn't expect, well, it wasn't a huge blow but I didn't expect to like, I just expected to look around and see things . . .

CO: So you didn't really want to touch them?

A: Well it was a bit like, if I break this it's going to be . . . // Yow! //

CO: So you were maybe a wee bit nervous, were you? Right, what was it like when you actually touched, did you stay nervous or was it alright?

A: No, I didn't, when I was just turning it over I felt, all right, this is it, it was a mixture really, I didn't feel nervous anymore, but I didn't feel like fully confident that I could sort of pick it up and just turn it over like that.

CO: So did you feel the same way, B:?

B: Yeah, oh, yeah, it was really weird actually, it's kind of hard to explain how you feel. But I think the whole museum I was expecting, because you think exhibition, you think museum, most museums are all really bright and the glass cases are so well lit up, you know, you don't even need the lights in there because you can see it anyway because the light in the room. And I don't think it adds so much atmosphere it's not so interesting.

A: Because in normal exhibitions there's huge lights overhead, just and you're just walking around and you just see things in glass cases you don't . . .

C: People shoving you out the way.

A; Yeah, like here we've got to see this, it was different and it set a really good atmosphere.

CO: Was it good not to have the general public there while you . . .?

A: Yeah.

B: Definitely.

C: We split up into groups and it was so much better because we could see at any time.

A: And it wasn't all - like if some people are crowding around a case you don't have to push and shove to see and in smaller groups, and it was like, you could just go around on your own and see it.

CO: So, did you feel comfortable there then? Would you say you felt comfortable?

ALL: Yeah.

CO: Oh, well that's good to hear. So as an experience overall, if you were trying to sort of sum up about that experience what do you think will stay in your memory in future years about that particular experience of ancient Egyptian objects?

B: I don't think I'll ever forget it.

A: I think I'll remember all of it.

B: You're not going to get a chance to do anything like that again, really.

A; It's like not many people get to hold ancient objects and not many people get to do a lot of things, and you're a person that had done that.

CO: So, so in a way it was a memorable experience.

Second Interview : 3-7-2000

CO: A: would you like to tell me first of all a little bit about what it was like when you first went into the museum?

A: (.) The darkness kind of like set the scene to give you sort of like the calm mood, and then it was really shocking as soon as you saw the mummy case, as soon as you stepped in there, because it was kind of amazing to think that they had a body in it from the Egyptian times. And the masks were really good when we got to look round the back. And when we went upstairs the handling ...

CO: Well, can - do you mind if we just talk about one floor at a time? Because what you've just said is really very interesting and I'm, I'd really like to sort of explore a little bit from what you've said because that was very interesting. You said something along the lines that it was quite amazing or shocking or whatever, to see the mummy case and to think that a body had been in there. // Yes // So that was really quite sort of earth-shattering was it for you? Can you tell me a little bit more about that? Can you tell me how that felt?

A: The detail on it was really amazing as well; and to think that like they had been touching it, the Egyptians had actually been touching it thousands of years ago, that was just like - you couldn't believe it. And then ...

CO: Right, you said you liked seeing round the back of the mummy masks.

A; Yeah, because it was interesting to see how they had built it up and it was really shocking that someone's head had been in there or something.

CO: So, in a way the fact that a human being had been actually using either a mummy case or a mask was really quite shocking to you. // Yes // What was that feeling like inside, can you describe that feeling?

A: You kind of got tingles down your spine to see it. I don't know but it was really strange.

CO: A really strange feeling. Right C;, can you tell me about when you first went into the exhibition?

C: I thought it was really kind of like ancient, it looked kind of like mysterious // mysterious // and it was kind of like good setting for the Egyptians and as A: said it was quite amazing when you saw the mummy for the first time as you went in oooooooo.

CO: I'm interested about this feeling of mystery, so could you tell me a little bit more about that, about this feeling?

C: The dark walls and the lighting, kind of like not too much lighting, and it was kind of like a bit dark in there.

CO: Right, and that gave you that feeling of mystery. If you feel that something

is mysterious because it's dark and whatever, how did that actually make you feel? You said it was mysterious, but if you could think back to what it was like standing there in that mysterious atmosphere how did it actually make you feel?

C: Kind of like amazed and kind of like of 'wow' . . . the ancient Egyptians had actually been touching these things, and there had been a mummy in that case and stuff.

CO: Right, so it made you . . . could you put that into words?

C: Feel kind of like shivery and weird.

CO: Shivery and weird. B:?

B: When I first went in there the dark and the silver writing on the walls like sort of went together, and when I saw the mummy case it's like a really good place to put it because you saw it as soon as you walked in through the door, and that sort of like set the scene like really quickly. And the mummy masks next to it was, really made me to think that a dead person had like been inside there; and you looked round the back and the bandages that it had been made out of looked really thin and you wouldn't have really thought that the Egyptians had made it.

CO: All those years ago you mean?

B: Yeah.

A: I would have thought it like rotted.

CO: You were surprised that it had lasted so long, right. When you looked at those feet, do you remember those feet?

A: I just felt amazed that they had actually been in Egypt, well it's not amazing that it was in Egypt but it was like that they had placed it there and . . .

C: Massive.

A: Yes, very big.

B: When I first like saw the feet they were really big, and that was only like the toes, I thought how big this statue's actually going to be, the toes are like really big.

CO: Well, when you went up on to the next floor, what was it like being in that first room?

C: Full.

CO: It was what sorry ?

C: It was full of artefacts.

B: Totally amazing.

A: First of all I went to try and look for the mummified hand and I found it and that was like really big; that had actually been a person's hand. You couldn't really imagine it.

B: Everyone was nearly fainting - it was strange and disgusting and I was like ...

C: What's so disgusting about it?

B: Although it was someone's hand...

A: It was all curled up like that, it was horrible. And then the little dormouse, it seemed strange like say if you run over a little mouse or something running along the road, people just leave it there, but they like picked them up and like mummified them. It seemed really strange that they like to do that.

B: Yeah and the kitten, didn't look like a kitten, did it? It was was sort of like really, really strange.

C: It was really, really small too.

A: And the falcon I didn't think it would look like that at all.

B: No, I thought it would ...

CO: So how did it make you feel when you actually saw these mummified animals?

A: You felt really tingly.

B: Yeah, I got ... it's just like, these are actually animals that we're seeing.

A: Yeah, I know.

C: Weird.

A: Yeah and they were so like in good condition and everything.

B: Yeah.

A: So ...

CO: What about when you were in the room where you were doing the treasure hunt and there were loads and loads of objects in there? What was it like being amongst all these objects?

B: It was good, wasn't it?

A: It made you feel ... they were objects but they were smaller than the pictures and ...

C: I couldn't find it for ages.

B: And we couldn't find ...

A: My card was about this big (Indicates with her hands) and the head was like a øøø sized head and I came to it and it was this small (Indicates with her hands) and I was like ... because I looked in the Roman mask area I think where all the Romans, but someone said I've seen it, it was next to all the little tiny things, and the little frog too.

B: Yes, the little frog. We had the jasper head - one of the objects that we did on the puzzles when you came to school, and I thought it would be like this size (Indicates the size with her hands) but when I came to it, it was like that. (Indicates again with her hands)

CO: It was very small, yes. So some of the objects were surprising.

C: Yeah, really good detail in there as well, they were really small, really good detail.

A: It made you like look really closely at them.

B: It made you like sort of like think about your object and how they made it.

A: Because you'd got like the information so we didn't have to carry on going and asking someone what it was, when we had to find out like what it was made out of and what it was used for, it was good because there was just the card there so if you did see the object that you liked you could just look up what it was instead of going and finding you or someone.

CO: So you said actually C:, you were amazed by the detail. What was it like though actually being amongst those objects? I mean you said it was amazing to see the detail and it was surprising because some were much smaller than you thought they were going to be. Was there anything else about those objects that made you feel ... ?

A: It kind of like made you feel you were around them and ...

C: In Egypt or something.

B: Yeah.

A: Because it was like all of them in the cases ...

B: You couldn't imagine that they were that old because they looked like really new, didn't they, some of them?

A: Did you clean them?

CO: They've been what we call conserved, so they've been - even if they are objects which aren't in very good condition, they actually been, not necessarily repaired, but they've been - well some of them have been repaired a little bit, but they've been put in a condition so you can see what they would have been like. I'm not saying they've been artificially repaired or anything like that, but they have been put in a condition that makes them stable to be in a glass case. So if something was totally broken and we didn't have any of the other pieces for instance, we wouldn't make a piece to make it perfect. Say we had a cup and it was partly broken we wouldn't make another piece to put in there, we would only repair it if we had the spare piece, so things that are broken we would leave broken if we had nothing, if we didn't have anything missing to go with it, so that's what we call conserving, you know it's like - we try to make it as good as we can with what we have, not making it artificial. So you thought they were amazing because of their detail, and you thought they were interesting because they had lasted so long.

A: And with the mask that we had the poster of, the big mask, whoever cut it in half, it was really strange because I thought it would have been - did it go over the person when they were buried?

CO: It would have been a mummy case.

A: Oh right, because inside it was really strange where - we thought it was going to be like wooden or something and when we looked inside it was black with the hieroglyphs, that was really like put you back, sort of thing.

B: The thing is that I actually thought that it should be sort of like moved to like to a slant so you could actually go round the back, so you could actually go round the back. So you could.

CO: You mean to invite people to go ...

B: Round the back because I think, I can't remember who it was, and she said that there was hieroglyphs round and I'm just like ...

A: How do you get round there? No you could get round there but it was really tight.

CO: A bit of a squeeze. Yes, but it was interesting going round the back because...

B: Of the hieroglyphs.

CO: The hieroglyphs ...

A: Took you back. It was just totally.

C: I didn't ...

CO: You didn't go round the back. What was your favourite object in that room, C:?

C: The boat probably or the hand, the wooden boat that you showed us in there.

A: Oh that was excellent. The way they had carved it.

B: It was a lot bigger than what I actually thought. I thought it would be sort of like ...

A: All the way they had carved it and everything it was just like, you can't get good stuff like that nowadays, well if they do they do it with machinery. But that was done with their hands so ...

CO: So if that room was different from the other room, you know when down the steps into that room? What was that like?

C: It was like, when I went in there on my own because all the others were in the other room, I saw the picture of someone ...

A: You got really scared, didn't you?

C: Yeah, it was a bit dark in there and I looked at the picture.

A: It looked pretty good when it's dark with just the light coming up in the cases.

B: The way that they'd actually arranged everything. The little dolls, I can't remember what they are called.

CO: Shabtis.

B: Shabtis, the next to the mummified things.

A: In order where you would find them.

B: Some ornaments put together.

CO: So that room was much darker you said and that made you feel ...

A: Scared and freaked out.

CO: Scared and freaked out.

B: Yeah.

CO: We don't know how the Egyptians would have felt really. Very often they wouldn't have seen the objects, unless they were making those sorts of objects they didn't necessarily see them on a regular basis.

A: Leading up to them, that made you stop straight away.

CO: When you saw the mummy masks in that dark room, did they make you feel...

A: I thought they looked quite sort of new, more modern than the others, I suppose the others were like pharaoh's they looked in gold.

B: They had hair on them.

CO: They were Romano Egyptian - they were actually made during the time when the Romans had invaded Egypt; they weren't as old as some of the other objects.

A: So were they made for the Romans then?

CO: While the Romans were there they, the Egyptians, took some of the styles of the Romans' hair styles, that's why they looked different. And the mummy masks that you saw downstairs did not have the influence of the Romans.

C: They were staring as well.

CO: Yes that's right. How did they make you feel when you saw those?

A: That was amazing to see those, but seeing the Egyptian pharaoh ones were a lot more like exciting sort of thing, they were totally amazing to see.

CO: Why were they more exciting?

B: Because they looked a lot older.

A: They looked more Egyptian.

CO: When you went upstairs, what was that like?

A: That was totally amazing.

B: I held the little blue servant.

There was an interruption here as the class next door vacated their room.

CO: That's great because we can now pick up where we left off. Who'd like to go first?

A: With the handling I held the little shabti figure, and that was made to go inside the tomb. It was - the detail on it, even though we had the gloves on it was still amazing that you were very nearly touching it, you were handling it so it was brehtaking really.

CO: Brehtaking, ah!

B: Also with the headrest you had like, it was very weird to think that someone had actually put their head on it.

C: Did you find that in a, where did you find that?

CO: Well, all these objects were found by Major Myers, this gentleman who had been at school at Eton and then he had gone out when he was in the army, gone

out to Egypt and he collected all these things, and where I imagine that he just bought, because there were several headrests actually, weren't there in the exhibition? But I think he must have bought them in a bazaar or somewhere, but, because there were, even at the time that he was in Egypt there were lots of dealers who were selling objects. And now we're very careful with these objects, we take care of them, and in fact, years ago before we had an exhibition of these objects they were just in packing cases and anybody could have gone along in the school and just taken them out and looked at them. So we're very, very careful about them now because we know how valuable they are.

C: Because you want them to last for ever.

CO: Yes we want them to last, because if we take care of them then more people will be able to look at them and appreciate them.

A: Are they going to New York?

CO: They are yes, yes, it will be interesting to see how they display them all there.

A: Hopefully they'll take as much care of them as you did.

CO: Oh, they will yes they're very good there. C:, which object did you have?

C: Oh I had the headrest again, but I didn't know what it was though; I thought you put your chin on it or something.

CO: You could, you could have put your chin on it really, yes, I mean, the chin's all part of the head, isn't it?

A: If they were made when they pulled the brains out, you might have put your head on it then.

CO: Yes, that's true, it could have been multi-purpose. How did it make you feel when you were touching that headrest?

C: I don't know really actually. I think it made me feel weird, it's like, 'I'm touching Egyptian objects'.

CO: So it was quite a special ...

C: I was holding them tight not to drop them.

CO: Holding them tight.

C: Yeah, not to ...

A: If you did drop them you'd be like ...

CO: Well, now the exhibition has finished.

A: Is it finished?

CO: Yes, it's finished at Eton now, and it's going to be packed up and sent to the States. We've had nearly two thousand children and no accidents, no accidents at all. We've been very lucky, the children have been very careful. So that's good, isn't it? So is there anything else that you feel touching the objects?

A: When you first came here when C: was holding onto the five hundred year old bowl - I thought that was amazing, then to handle those was just like ...

B: Without gloves or anything. Then with the three thousand year old things, even though we had gloves on you still felt ...

A: Amazing.

CO: So that was . . . of all the experiences you had when you were at the exhibition, which one was the best experience do you think?

C: Handling.

CO: Handling for you, C: What about you B: ?

B: Handling definitely.

CO: Handling was the best, yes.

A: & B: Yeah.

B: Because it's like once in a life-time opportunity, you would never actually hold something which is that old.

A: Like at Highclere Castle, they didn't make a big deal out of it; and they were replicas anyway.

CO: Oh, they were replicas; they weren't the real thing.

B: At Highclere everything was like scattered around not all in one place.

A: It was represented really well.

C: It didn't have any kind of like writing, well not much writing; it had kind of like some of the facts not all of them.

A: The guide told you those.

CO: So was it good, do you think it was good to find the information for yourself or was it better to be told the information?

A: Then you don't have to like say if everyone wanted to find out about an object you don't have to like wait to find out. Like at Eton they had the labels so you could straight away find out.

CO: But you, when you were doing the treasure hunt you were finding out for yourself, weren't you? And when you were handling you were finding out for yourself. Is it better to find out for yourself do you think?

C: It's more exciting, it's more challenging.

A: Yes.

CO: More challenging.

B: You have to let your mind work.

CO: So, about this experience altogether then, what is it about these ancient objects do you think that is so, well what is it about ancient Egyptian objects that's really interesting?

C: They're so old and detailed.

B: Yeah.

C: They're so different to like normal day objects, and how they lived.

CO: Right, is there anything else you want to tell me about that experience before we stop? Or have we covered everything? There's nothing else that stands out in your memory?

C: No not really.

B: When we were going to the exhibition we could also like look around at Eton College as well as Egypt.

A: That was really breath-taking, it really took our breath away when we even saw the building of Eton, it was just, wow!

CO: So it was just exciting just being at Eton College itself that was all part of the excitement.

A: Since it's a boys' school we won't go there again.

CO: Well, you might do, you might go there again. Thank you very much for giving me this interview.

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF LETTERS FROM SCHOOL K AND SCHOOL N

School K

When I went into the gallery and saw the mummy case I was surprised to see how detailed it was. I expected it to have some detail but not that much. I was also amazed to hear that Rameses II would take other people's statues and make them for himself, and see the feet of the statue they were huge. On the middle floor I was surprised to see how tiny one of the dolls was. It had blue beaded hair and its body looked like it was made of string. I was amazed to see a mummified hand. On the third floor I thought I was lucky to be able to hold something that was really old. If I got the chance I would go back.

I really enjoyed the Egyptian exhibition. My favourite one was the mummy case. I liked the patterns that were on the inside of the mummy case. The best bit was all the two hundred Egyptian pieces, the faces and mummy cases were interesting. Handling the things was interesting too.

I thoroughly enjoyed coming to experience, looking and touching ancient Egyptian artefacts. As soon as I stepped into Eton I began enjoying myself. The mummy case was beautifully decorated. It looked so heavy. The two masks were amazing. I could not believe we were stood looking at these ancient artefacts let alone touch a few! When my partner and I touched the servant I was fascinated. It was then I realised how privileged I was. When we got to the middle floor I was stunned; at least two hundred artefacts were in front of me. I began to look around. I had a tingle when I saw the hand. I could not believe they mummified dormice. I chose the white face picture. I thought it would be much larger but it was tiny.

As I entered the dark, dimly lit room I felt excited yet curious. I looked in the first thing I saw was an Egyptian mummy case. My insides tingled then I turned and saw the masks. It felt weird looking at something that had been on a dead man's head for thousands of years. When I went upstairs and walked in the room I was surrounded by Egyptian models. I was interested in the hunt but was surprised to see how small some things were. I went to the final room. I felt special being able to hold over three thousand year old objects. Over all I think it was an interesting experience and I would go back.

As I walked in the room I saw the masks, I thought they were very detailed. The base of the statue was detailed and the man's statue was very big. The mummy case was very clever and detailed. There was so many things on the second floor I did not have a chance to see all of it. On the next floor we held a headrest and lots of other very old things. Over all it was very exciting.

I found it really interesting visiting Eton College exhibition. The atmosphere when I walked in really helped. I thought that the mummified hand was amazing; it was so small. When we handled the artefacts I had a canopic jar lid and although I knew what it was I expected it to be a lot smaller, sort of thinner and, as I am making one in clay at the moment, I was fascinated by it.

When I walked into the room I was amazed by seeing a mummy case covered in designs and inside full of hieroglyphs. Also, as I moved on, there were two mummy masks for the pharaohs all covered in decoration. In the far corner there was Rameses II feet made out of granite. I was fascinated that it took eight people to carry it. One of the floors had Egyptian ornaments; we had to put on some gloves and we could actually hold some. Most of them were over three thousand years old. I enjoyed Eton very much.

First my group went up to the third floor and we held some Egyptian artefacts. I felt that we were special because we got to hold them. Then we went to the first floor and we sketched some artefacts. Then we went to the second floor and we had to look for some artefacts. I thought we were privileged and special.

When I first walked into the room I couldn't believe my eyes. The masks had beautiful gold-leaf on their faces. The mummy case was amazing; all of the pictures, hieroglyphs and gods. On the third floor I thought it was lovely of you to let us hold the objects. That Egyptian eye was glass; you couldn't see through it. Egyptian things are my style.

It was a fantastic trip to Eton because the objects are so old, small and big. It was fun holding the objects and it was good fun looking at the objects and masks of all sorts of faces. The wooden boat was big up against everything else.

When you unlocked the door I was really excited to see everything that was thousands and thousands of years old. The mummy case was amazing with all the tiny details it must of taken hours to paint. On the next floor I was amazed to see a mummified dormouse and a mummified hand; it looked so small. On the very top floor it was brilliant. It was the best there. I really enjoyed actually holding an object from about four thousand years ago; it was amazing that they were still in tact.

My visit to Eton was really exciting; the part I liked best was handling the ancient objects. I let my partner turn our object over in case I broke it. I didn't like thinking about breaking something that was three - four thousand years old. The first floor, which contained the mummified hand, dormouse, vulture and kitten were really interesting. Some things were really small and detailed. We were amazed to find a doll an inch tall. The mummified things were a bit strange. The mummified hand was a bit black and looked as if it had shrunk but it was perfectly preserved and every detail was still there. To think that hand had lasted thousands of years was creepy. The dormouse in its own coffin was cute but also creepy. The ground floor was where the mummy case and masks were. I enjoyed sketching but I never knew the inside of a mummy case had so much detail on them and masks had lots of gold on them. Major Myers must have been important, and I'm glad I saw what he brought from Egypt. It was really good and I learnt a lot. Thank you for letting us see the exhibition and I would like to come again to see some things I missed.

We walked in pairs through the entrance of Eton College. The walls towered over us with amazing brickwork. When I stepped in the door I didn't know what to

expect. The black walls ahead gave the impression of a very quiet museum. I turned the corner and was faced with a three thousand year old mummy case, the details were incredible. I felt pleased to see something so old but in perfect condition. The colours were stunning. I didn't know the ancient Egyptians were so civilised. My group then went upstairs to the top floor to actually touch some ancient artefacts. I felt extremely pleased to examine some of the objects that we had just seen in books. Overall it was an amazing experience.

I walked through the door the first thing I saw was some Egyptian masks. I saw that the paint was scratched but I still wanted to draw them. I turned my head slightly and I saw the mummy case, it has the bottom and the top in. The bottom had holes in and the top had wood so they would fit together probably without coming off. I thought for Major Myers to find this it was very good. I sketched the mummy case and the masks. I went on the next level and there was about two hundred different Egyptian things on the shelves. I looked at everything and I thought it was pretty amazing. We had cards and we had to find that object and we had to take a good look at it then answer lots of questions about our object. Lots of objects were smaller than I thought. We went up to the next floor. We sat down on the chairs. There were objects on the table. We had to put on some see-through gloves and we got to hold an object each. The teacher asked what the object was made of and what it was for; everyone found out in the end.

As I approached Eton I felt a privilege as I entered the courtyard; I felt like I was in a big cage with no where to get out. When I found myself in the museum I saw the mummy case; it was incredibly how the two parts were held together. Then on the right there were the mummy masks, one with hieroglyphs on and one without, and with these big round eyes they gave you a creepy feeling and look. To my front there was Rameses II feet - statue - he had size sixteen feet - that's big! Then I went to the middle floor when I saw the first glass cage was an axe that was five thousand years old. Then in the second case were Egyptian models that went in the tombs. Then I went into the second part; then I came to find myself staring at mummified kitten, mouse, falcon and human hand. Then I had a shiver run down my back. It really scared me. Then I went on the third floor where we were allowed to handle Egyptian objects. It was amazing. I had an exciting day.

Our trip to Eton was extremely exciting. It really boosted our knowledge forward for our history topic. I was amazed to find the artefacts were millennia old, yet still in brilliant condition. The mummy case was fascinating the way it was fastened together and the way it had been preserved for years. My favourite was the second floor. I felt so privileged to be holding a four thousand year old object.

When I entered the room it felt strange, the effect of black walls and dim lighting was very good. When I saw the mummy case it was a lot bigger than I thought one to be. When we went on the second floor I was amazed at how many artefacts Major Myers had collected. When I collected a photograph I expected the item to be quite big but it was about two inches high. On the third floor I really enjoyed handling some artefacts. I handled the lid of a canopic jar which was covered with mud or clay and carved out of wood. I really enjoyed your Egyptian exhibition.

When I stepped into the first room I was amazed at how big the mummy case was, and seeing all the little patterns on it, it must have taken ages. When I got onto the second floor I was stunned when I saw the mummified hand, kitten, falcon and dormouse with its coffin. When I was on the last floor fascinated by the artifacts and actually touching objects were amazing because they were at least two thousand years BC. I had a great time at Eton College.

I was amazed to see an object that was made by an Egyptian person. I felt so excited touching something that an Egyptian might have touched. I felt really

interested when we got to handle the objects. The mummy case was amazing; to see all those little pictures and hieroglyphs is a great privilege. I really liked seeing the mummified hand. I greatly enjoyed my visit to Eton College.

When I stepped in I saw the mummy case and the detail was amazing. The masks looked thicker than they were from the front. The feet carved into the stone were massive - I drew the hieroglyphs. When we went to the top floor when we held the ancient Egyptian things I held the cat's head that was truly amazing. Some things like the headrest looked really weird and not like the headrests we have today. When we went to the second floor I looked around and when I saw the mummified hand, mummified dormouse and mummified kitten, the kitten didn't look like a kitten because it was long and thin. The little white head looked quite big but in reality it was tiny. I had a very enjoyable day; I felt privileged to be there.

As I entered and saw the black walls of the room I knew this trip was going to be mysterious and ancient. The superb lighting set the scene for the ancient Egyptians. When we went upstairs to the second floor I was totally amazed and felt privileged to be allowed to look freely at the objects around me. The treasure hunt was good and we really were looking for treasure. On the third floor I was tingling all over holding something thousands of years old. I had definitely learnt something more about the ancient Egyptians.

As I walked into the first room I felt really privileged to be able to see a real mummy case and two real masks. I thought that on the masks it was gold paint but it was actually gold crushed into gold leaf. The case was really detailed and colourful. On the middle floor I was totally amazed that on the cards the objects looked big but in real life are tiny. The mummified hand looked like black leather. Up on the top floor I thought I was really lucky to actually handle ancient Egyptian artefacts. My favourite artefact was the bronze cat with its ears pierced.

I thoroughly enjoyed this trip to Eton's exhibition; to see and even to touch these amazing artefacts was incredible. To think that these objects were over three thousand years old was unimaginable. Upstairs on the middle floor was excellent. When I saw the mummified hand I felt a tingle down my spine to think that this hand had lasted for thousands of years.

My favourite Egyptian things are the mummies and the scarab beetles. I thought it was fascinating how they made all of the small things and they had all that detail on them. I felt very lucky that I got to hold a real Egyptian thing.

SCHOOL N

I liked holding the eye from the death mask. I felt I was holding what the Egyptians held. I felt a bit scared because it was a bit dark but it was fun too. I felt really old from ancient times and I felt weird.

I enjoyed the mummy case most about the exhibition. It is much better to see things yourself than see it in the newspaper or on TV. When I went into the funeral section I felt weird and excited. When I held the artefacts I felt like, wow, I'm actually holding something ancient.

I liked holding the mummy case because it was creepy, because I felt like I was going to be buried. I enjoyed it because it was incredible to see things which were used years ago. In the funeral section I felt a spider would get me. I felt I was lucky to be able to hold a thing which was held thousands of years ago.

What I enjoyed most about the exhibition was when I could touch and feel things as well as answer questions. I liked it because I could feel it as if I was an Egyptian. I felt sorry for all the people who died in the funeral section. When I

held the artefacts I felt as if I was an Egyptian.

I enjoyed drawing the patterns on the mask and I was amazed at the condition it was in. I enjoyed it because you could see things so close up. When I went into the funeral section I felt like I wanted to explore it. When I held the artefact I felt like an ancient Egyptian myself!

I enjoyed touching the artefacts including the shabti and headrest. I liked this particular bit because you know that somebody about five thousand years ago would be using the same object. I felt quite funny in the funeral bit especially when I saw the mummies. When I felt the artefacts I felt proud because nobody else in my family had done it.

I most enjoyed the funeral exhibition because it was the first chance I've had to see mummified animals. It was great to be able to hold the artefacts because it was like going back in time.

What I enjoyed most about the exhibition was touching the object because it made me shiver and it felt like I was holding them in real time. I felt really weird when I went in the funeral section; it felt like that I was in a coffin. It felt like eyes watching me because I was holding an eye.

What I liked and enjoyed most about the trip was where you had to pick a photo and had to find it and draw it and write about it. I liked it because it was exciting and it felt like I was actually back in time to the Egyptian's times. When I held the objects some were heavy, some were light. All of them looked very old and they were.

Wow, it's so brilliant. I felt scary, very cold and lucky.

What I enjoyed most about the exhibition was touching the ancient objects. It made me feel very happy when I felt the ancient Egyptian objects. In the funeral section I felt sort of dizzy because there was lots of pictures all over the place.

My favourite thing was when we went to see the mask because it was nice to see real ancient Egyptian stuff. I enjoyed it because it was really, really, really old stuff. I felt quite strange when I saw the mummified skeleton and the masks. I felt quite funny when I held the the artefacts because they were used thousands of years ago.

What I enjoyed most about the exhibition was touching the ancient things because we were allowed to touch them. I also enjoyed it because everywhere there were things about ancient Egypt. When I went into the funeral section I felt very, very dizzy. When I held the artefacts I felt really amazed.

I enjoyed holding the ancient Egyptian stuff most. It made me feel like I was in Egypt. In the funeral section I felt very stupid because it spooked me out.

In the middle section I felt like a detective. When I held the artefact it made me think what they were made for.

I enjoyed seeing and feeling the objects on the top floor and seeing some of the rings they wore. I also enjoyed it because you could see lots and lots of amazing things and because they were very old. I felt really amazed seeing objects at least three thousand five hundred years old. When I held the artefacts I felt like an ancient Egyptian doing something with them.

I enjoyed the coffin on the ground floor most because I could see the condition of it. When I went into the funeral section I felt strange; I thought I was being buried. And when I held the artefact I felt quite strange too.

CHAPTER FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EXHIBITION
'The Collector's Art: Ancient Egypt at Eton College'
THE MYERS MUSEUM
1999 - 2000

5.1 A Coffin Fragment adjacent to the Exhibition Title

5.2 Two Halves of a Decorated Mummy Case

5.3 Base of a Pink Granite Statue of the Feet of Rameses II

5.4 Listening to Instructions in the Presence of Two Pharaonic Mummy Masks

SKETCHING

5.5 Investigating the Hieroglyphs and Sketching the Feet

5.6 Sketching the Pharaonic Mummy Masks

THE TREASURE HUNT

5.7 }
 } 'You Have to Let your Mind Work'
5.8 }

5.9 Seeing it in Real Life - An Ancient Serving Girl

5.10 Ancient Treasure - Mesmerized by the Faïence

5.11 Searching for a shabti

5.12 The 'Mummy Heads'

HANDLING ANCIENT OBJECTS

5.13 'Hands On'

5.14 Making a Thorough Investigation

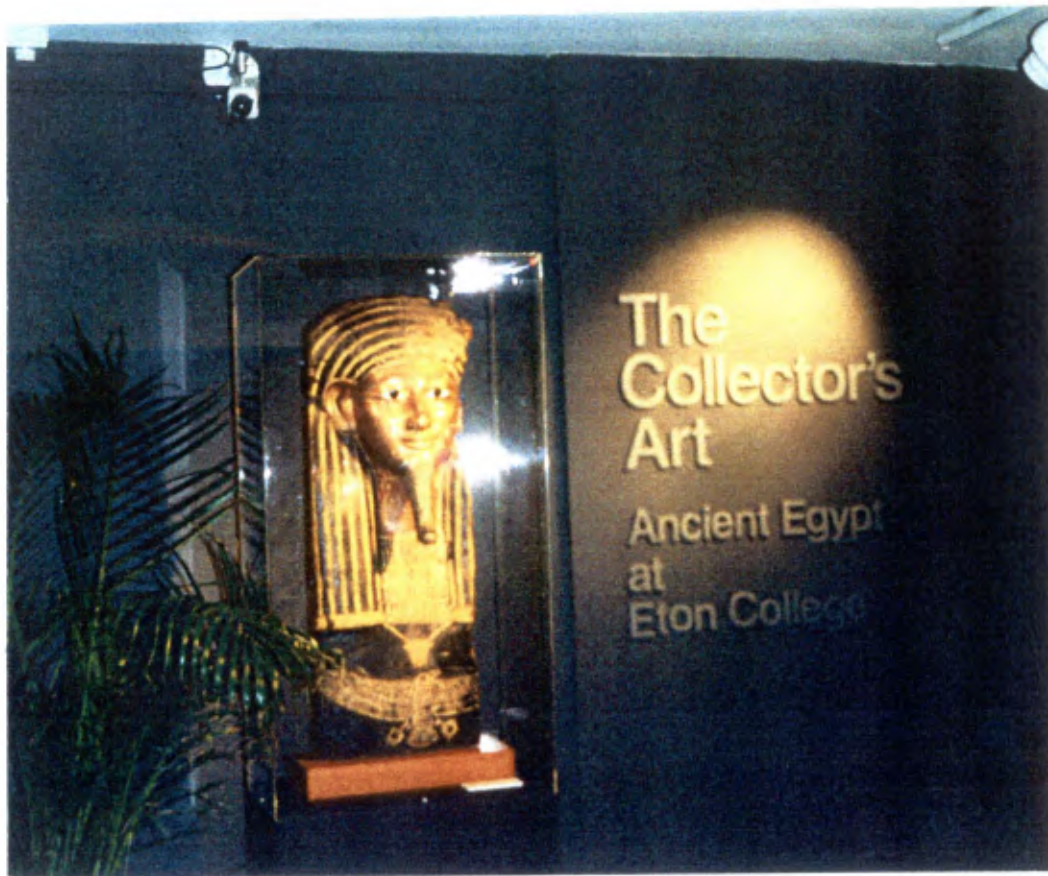
5.15 What do you think?

5.16 Taking responsibility

5.17 Too timid to touch

5.18 Listening to ideas

5.19 Shopping for mementos



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THE TREASURE HUNT



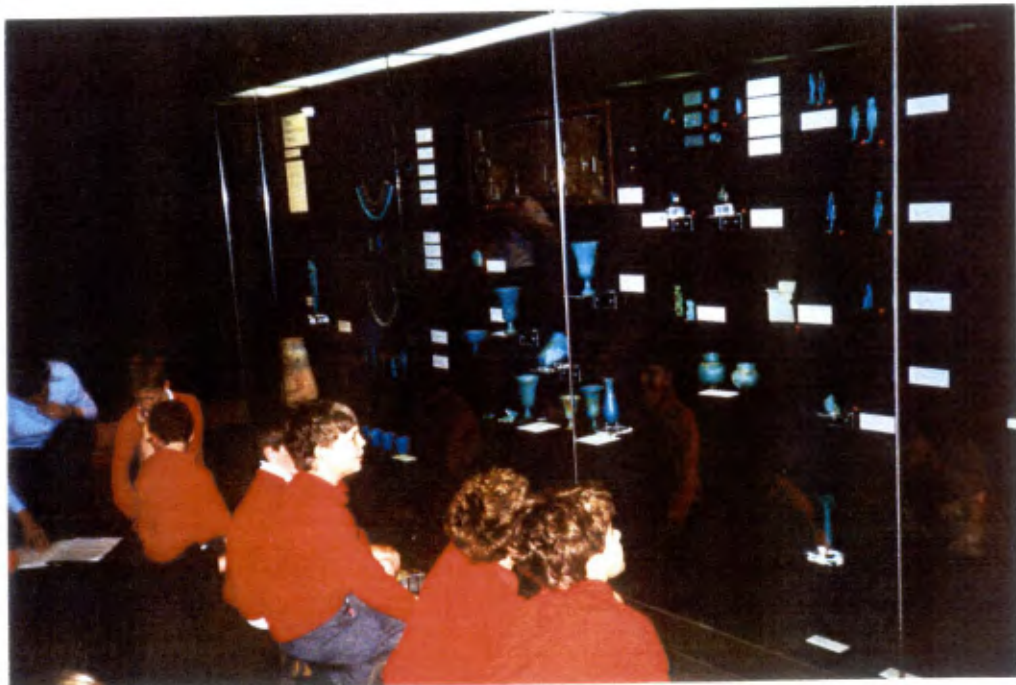
5.7 and 5.8 'You Have to Let your Mind Work'



5.9 Seeing it in Real Life - An Ancient Serving Girl



5,10 Ancient Treasure - Mesmerized by the Faïence



5.11 Searching for a shabti



5.12 The 'Mummy Heads'



HANDLING ANCIENT OBJECTS

5.13 'Hands On'



5.14 Making a Thorough Investigation



5.15 What do you think?



5,16 Taking responsibility



5.17 Too timid to touch



5.18 Listening to ideas





5.19 Shopping for mementos

CHAPTER FIVE
THE MUSEUM VISIT: A DESCRIPTION

Introduction

In this account of the children's museum encounter I draw upon my experience of teaching, my observations of the children's behaviour during their visits, and their written and verbal statements¹. I will also use a variety of literary texts to help illuminate the meanings. In this way I will attempt to access the pre-reflective sphere of the experience through the richness of the description.

In the process of trying to convey the complexity and spontaneity of the experience, I adopt the voice of a teacher using a narrative format. In addition, I use six children's voices which comprise composite statements from my research data. To preserve anonymity, I have chosen the fictional names of Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas as the teacher, and Zahra, Bella, Harriet, Edward, James and Rahul as the children. The description covers the preparation for the visit; travel to and arrival at the museum; the three activities (sketching, the treasure hunt and the handling session); departing from the museum, and finally, returning to school.

PART ONE

1. PREPARATION AND TRAVEL:

1.1 Today's the Day:

It's a wonderfully bright autumn morning, a few weeks into term - refreshingly crisp but not too cold. As I enter the drive of the Primary School where I teach, I notice the leaves on the tall, expansive beech trees beginning to turn promising a magnificent show of colour. I am Elizabeth Thomas, and today 3T, my class of eighteen pupils, are arriving early because we are off to the museum to see the Egyptian exhibition. Two weeks ago an Education Officer came into school to tell us about the exhibition and the Victorian soldier/collector, Major William Myers, who donated the antiquities which comprise the collection. This whetted our appetite, and since then we have all been looking forward to the trip; in fact we have found it very hard to wait.

At 8.10 a.m. as the children approach the classroom all I can hear is, 'Today's the day, today's the day !' Within no time their chatter grows louder and the room begins to spin. Eventually I clap my hands, quickly call the register and we make our way to the school gates. As we wait for the coach, the children start jumping up and down like bubbles in a bottle of sparkling water.

Harriet: Oh, Mrs. Thomas, when are we going? When are we going? We just can't wait.

Mrs. Thomas: Shortly, Harriet, very shortly.

Edward: What's it going to be like?

Mrs. Thomas: You'll soon see, Edward.

Whilst trying to calm the children down the coach arrives and within no time they have eagerly clambered on board and we're on our way.

1.2 Arriving:

As we arrive at Eton the children are all fingers and thumbs collecting their possessions, putting on their coats and scrambling to be first to disembark. Then, after lining them up on the pavement, my colleagues, Jane Maxwell and Helen Davies, lead off with their groups, whilst I bring up the rear with mine. After shepherding the children across the road we walk in an ungainly fashion across a cobbled courtyard flanked by Georgian and Tudor buildings. Surrounded by history, our heads swivel from side to side and, as the chapel clock chimes ten, our eyes dart up and down trying to locate where the noise is coming from. It's at this point I overhear a number of children:

Bella: When I entered the courtyard I felt like I was in a big cage with no where to get out.

Rahul: Yeah, but (.) I was thinking when I was on the coach ... are we really going to see a creature mummified?

James: Did you? Well on the way I felt all shivery - I thought there might be bits of Tutankhamun's mask.

It's true, we don't know what awaits us - there might be objects belonging to the famous boy pharaoh, Tutankhamum, or even a real mummy. After going under a modest little archway, the small redbrick museum is in sight; at long last we are about to come face to face with some interesting discoveries.

Zahra: I say, Harriet, I just can't wait to go in.

Harriet: Neither can I. I feel so excited ... I'm looking forward to seeing all the Egyptian things.

Edward: I think it's going to be really fun ... really fun.

At this point the children surge forward like impatient dogs straining at their leads. However, as they glimpse the two white doors standing slightly ajar their chatter subsides. ‘Come on ... come and see what’s inside’ they seem to say.

PART TWO

2. THE MUSEUM AT LAST:

2.1 Stepping In:

Almost immediately the Education Officer appears. After greeting us and showing us where to hang up our coats, she leads the way to the first gallery. Gradually the children drift in and while they wait for everyone to assemble, they talk softly to each other as they adjust to the space.

Zahra: It’s a bit dark and it’s really quiet; I thought I was going into a tomb because tombs are quiet and they’re really dark, aren’t they?

Bella: Zahra, when I came through the doors I felt a little bit shy and really scared.

Edward: I know what you mean Bella, because I have a funny feeling inside - I thought the walls were going to be white and not greyish; but, as soon as I saw the black walls I knew this trip was going to be mysterious and ancient - it’s a good setting for the Egyptians.

Rahul: Well, I’m quite surprised how small it is; do you think there are any extra rooms because I want to see more?

As I listened and observed the children I could tell some were uneasy. In this small, dark space everything felt eerie as if at any moment something ghoulish might jump out from the shadows. Anxiously and nervously their eyes dart hither and thither, and I notice some of them huddling together. Others venture over to the exhibits, mouths wide open - intrigued and amazed: however, despite some apprehension, curiosity keeps them entranced; as Rahul says, ‘I want to see more’.

When I become aware of the children’s behaviour I’m reminded of the evacuee, Lucy, a character in C. S. Lewis’s novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who has a similar experience when she explores the unfamiliar house which is to be her temporary, wartime home.

Shortly after that they looked into a room that was quite empty except for one big wardrobe ... ‘Nothing there!’ said Peter, and they all trooped out again - all except Lucy. She stayed behind because she thought it would be worthwhile trying the door of the wardrobe, even though she felt almost sure that it would be locked. To her surprise it opened quite easily... she saw several coats hanging up - mostly long fur coats. There was nothing Lucy liked so much as the smell and feel of fur. She immediately stepped into the wardrobe ... a moment later she found that she was standing in the middle of a wood at

night-time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air. Lucy felt a little frightened but she felt very inquisitive and excited as well ... 'I can always get back if anything goes wrong', thought Lucy. She began to walk forward, crunch, crunch over the snow ... (Lewis,2000:10-13).

For Lucy, like the children, this mixture of feelings is confusing. It's rather like an internal tug of war - with fear and inquisitiveness pulling her in opposite directions. Initially, the smell and feel of the fur was a sensuous delight - it caressed her skin urging her to stay. However, when she finds herself unexpectedly in a snow-covered wood, she's not only filled with fear but also curiosity. Whatever could be happening? Where was she? Alarmed by this potentially dangerous situation, Lucy could easily have turned back; and yet, her inquisitiveness spurs her on with the promise of exciting things to come.

PART THREE

3. THE ACTIVITIES - SKETCHING:

3.1 Signposts:

After giving us a formal welcome the Education Officer describes the layout of the exhibition and the activities. There's a chance to sketch a decorative mummy case, two opulent death masks and a statue of Rameses II's feet on the ground floor; a treasure hunt in the gallery above; and an opportunity to handle a small collection of ancient artefacts on the top floor. Hearing these words the children turn to one another and then to me in stunned silence. Did they hear correctly? Would they really be able to touch ancient objects? I nod and smile, confirming that yes, they would be able to touch.

Once the children have found their groups and dispersed, I give out paper and pencils to my own group and suggest they choose just one of the objects. As Harriet and Edward move over to the feet, Bella and Rahul approach the death masks, and James and Zahra go towards the tall mummy case.

3.2 Sketching - the Feet of Rameses II:

Initially, Harriet and Edward stand motionless in front of the statue of Rameses II's feet sizing it up; then they move around it brushing aside the large potted-palm leaves positioned nearby.

Harriet: Oh, this statue looks eerie to me - I don't like it - I think it's going to kick me. I know it's amazing how it's been preserved but it's just strange really when you think of the whole thing apart from the feet.

Edward: Well, I think Rameses II must have had size sixteens - that big. (He indicates the size with outstretched arms) It's amazing with all the hieroglyphs; I don't know what they say though.

Seeing this pair of enormous granite feet severed from the rest of its body I can understand why the children's faces are screwed up. While they try to puzzle it out I am also left wondering what happened to the rest of the statue. They certainly look very odd. Watching the children stare at the ceiling attempting to picture its full height, I begin to imagine what it might be like to feel under the suspicious eye of this colossal pharaoh towering three or four metres above me.

Harriet: I don't know (...) it's just like the person standing there right now.

Mrs. Thomas: Have you two started yet? Where would you like to sketch these feet from?

Harriet and Edward galvanise themselves into action and kneel on the hard wood-block floor: putting their clip-boards down they are tempted to start touching the statue.

Harriet: Oh, Edward, I can't touch it. I can't touch it.

Edward: Go on, Harriet - it's exciting (...) if you think about it, it's amazing that these feet have actually been in Egypt (...) well, it's not amazing that they were in Egypt but, that they're here - that they've been placed here.

Harriet: I know (...) I was thinking, this is real, this is real, but I can't touch it.

To see these feet unprotected by a glass case - just there on the floor with no sign prohibiting touching is quite unbelievable for the children. Incredulity is written all over their faces. I notice how timidly Harriet keeps approaching the statue only to back away suddenly. What will happen if she touches it? Why is it so tantalising and yet so scary all at the same time? However, though Edward boldly touches the feet, he seems visibly amazed by their presence. As I witness the children coming face to face with reality I'm reminded of a few short lines from a poem by Rilke:

Their grateful hearts give thanks the world is real.
Reality lies all around their hands.
As if refreshed, made new, their eyes dwell on ...
(Rilke,1992:189).

3.3 Making Contact:

Eventually Harriet plucks up the courage to touch this huge statuary fragment, and she and Edward tentatively run their fingers over its gritty surface, probing its deep hieroglyphic crevices. Tilting their head sideways kneeling on

the floor they try to make sense of the pictorial shapes but it's an awkward position to hold for long.

Edward: You know Harriet, when I first saw it I thought it was the feet of a sphinx and I didn't expect it to be as rough, did you?

Harriet: Well, it's rough yes, but it's cold. It's just so heavy, like a massive paper-weight.

Edward: Yeah, when you touch it it's just amazing because it feels like someone else has touched it, maybe a king or a pharaoh.

Eventually the two pick up their clip-boards preparing to sketch.

Harriet: It's so difficult when you have to sit on the floor. It would be much better if there were cushions.

After a good deal of wriggling Harriet begins to concentrate. Then, once her eyes start ricocheting from the statue to the paper her pencil begins to describe the feet on her page. This will be a permanent reminder of the day I think to myself.

3.4 Sketching - the Death Masks:

Whilst Harriet and Edward are busy, Bella and Rahul contemplate the two magnificent death masks. Placed side by side within a large free-standing vitrine, the children can see the back, sides, front and even the inside.

Rahul: Bella, they look like Egyptian pharaohs. If you come round the back it's really interesting because you can see they've been made with really thin bandages. The Egyptians were really, really clever to do that with no technical machines.

Bella: Oh, (...) how could they find all that gold and melt it together? How could they hand-paint all those complicated patterns? You're right, they're beautiful, the colours are beautiful. They look as if they might fall to pieces if we touched them, though.

Mesmerized by these two golden faces contrasted against the charcoal walls, I begin to appreciate how these distinctively Egyptian objects could help the children conjure up scenes of pharaonic opulence and grandeur. Moreover, as I listen to their conversation, I can tell how fascinated they are by the designs, colours and craftsmanship. How could the ancient Egyptians make something so beautiful?

Mrs. Thomas: How are you getting on, you two?

Rahul: I'm enjoying sketching because I love drawing - it's my hobby. Actually it's easy drawing the masks.

Mrs. Thomas: How about you, Bella?

Bella: It's really fun although I'm not very good at drawing.

3.5 Further Engagement:

As the children continue, they focus on the death masks' expressions and especially on their enormous black eyes defined with kohl, (Egyptian mascara). While one has a wry smile and enjoys a private joke, the other has an impassive mouth which seems more mystifying. It's difficult to engage with this one as his stare stretches out way, way beyond the children.

Bella: When I look at this one I get tingles down my spine - I don't know why it's really strange.

Rahul: Oh that one - his big round eyes give me a creepy feeling. It's quite a mystery because if you think about it you don't really know who they belonged to; whose was it?

Mrs. Thomas: I don't know Rahul, but he looks rather important.

The children's comments really start to make me think. The enigmatic expression on the patterned mask is perplexing; in fact, the gaze is so determined and fixed I can't engage with it either. Every time I try he looks straight through me and I find this unnerving. After checking up on the other children's progress I return to Bella and Rahul.

3.6 Reflecting on the Objects:

Rahul: It's cool to look at stuff that's three thousand years old - if you really think about it it's a long time ago.

Bella: When I saw the other one had got paint off it, only a little bit of paint, I had the feeling that it was quite millions - thousands of years old.

As the children reflect on the age of the masks, I begin to think about their very great age. Finding it difficult, I wonder how a child of seven manages. Despite the objects' visible decrepitude, the children struggle to stretch their imagination - a thousand years feels so remote, so far away, it might as well be millions.

3.7 Objects Stir the Imagination:

At this point, when the children begin to put the final touches to their sketches, their conversation takes an interesting turn.

Bella: When you think about it it's weird looking at something that's been on a dead man's head for thousands of years. It just made me think it was on someone - on a real person.

Rahul: Yeah, it's shocking - imagine being trapped in there and not being able to get out; it's scary.

James and Zahra overhear the conversation and join in.

Zahra: Did you say trapped, Rahul?

Rahul: Yeah,.

Zahra: Well, I felt scared because if someone trapped someone in the mummy case they would be there for ages. Actually, once I got in the room I felt like I was being buried.

James: I was really shocked as soon as I saw the mummy case when I stepped in here, because it was kind of amazing to think that they had a body in it from Egyptian times.

Bella: It was a bit dark when we went in and the mummy case made me feel shivery, and it was like they were going to put it over me ... I thought they were going to take me and bury me.

Zahra: Who?

Bella: The mummies!

Listening to these comments I consider what it would be like to be incarcerated, totally bound up with bandages unable to move, surely it would be terrifying. Reflecting further I recall a frightening incident in, *The Treasure Seekers*, by E. Nesbit, when Albert, the 'child-next-door', helps the four Bastable children dig for treasure in their back garden.

'Let me go in feet first', said Albert-next-door. 'I'll dig with my boots - I will truly, honour bright'. So we let him get in feet first ... and we all stood on the ground over him, waiting - and all in a minute the ground gave way, and we tumbled together in a heap: and when we got up there was a little shallow hollow where we had been standing, and Albert-next-door was underneath stuck quite fast, because the roof of the tunnel had tumbled in on him ... It was dreadful the way he cried and screamed ... (Nesbit, 1958:28-29).

One can just imagine how poor Albert felt with the ground weighing heavily upon him restricting his breathing and movements; the gritty taste of the soil, the cold, black emptiness cloaking his eyes, and worst of all the thought that he might be trapped and perish.

3.8 Sketching - the Mummy Case: 'WOW'!

Despite these feelings, when Zahra and James learnt they were going to draw the mummy case at the start of the session they were overjoyed.

James: Wow, it's so cool - I've never seen these things before - it's astonishing to see a real mummy case - it's just so amazing ... when I looked more closely I was surprised to see how detailed it was. I expected it to have some detail but not that much.

Zahra: It's breath-taking; I'm out of breath (...) I'm not so sure about the coffin. When I looked in for the first time my insides tingled - I had a real fright when I saw it.

As the word 'wow' explodes from James's lips he sounds and looks as if he's going to burst with excitement; he can scarcely contain himself. Watching his

reaction reminds me of an article I read recently from the periodical, *Ancient Egypt*. In this account, Patricia Gilbert describes her first *real* view of the Pyramids, conveying a similar thrill born from sheer amazement. She writes:

Up (after what seems minutes) at 5 a.m. for a trip to the Pyramids. Wash, sun hat, shorts and cream and out into the daylight and WOW! There in front of us are the Pyramids ... A shudder starts in the brain and reaches your toes as you stare in wonder. You want to shout and tell everyone, 'I've seen the Pyramids!' ... The Pyramids on television and in magazines are powerful images, but these convey nothing of the incredible feeling of wonder, the sheer size, smell and sight of the reality (Gilbert, in *Ancient Egypt*, 2000:36-37).

Like Zahra, Patricia's first sight of the Pyramids is quite shocking; however, while Zahra's insides tingle, Patricia feels a shudder gradually moving through her entire body. Like James, her elation explodes with a shout of joy. It was such a momentous feeling she could hardly believe it was happening to her - it was incredible.

For Zahra that 'wow' feeling is breathlessness. Her first sight of the mummy case is so unexpected she gasps; it is literally breath-taking. Thinking about this puts me in mind of a short extract from last term's class reader, *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson-Burnett, where the nine year old, Mary Lennox, describes how she feels when she makes an amazing discovery.

Mary's heart began to thump and her hands to shake a little in her delight and excitement ... she put her hand in her pocket, drew out the key, and found it fitted the keyhole. She put the key in and turned it. It took two hands to do it, but it did turn. And then she took a long breath and looked behind her up the long walk to see if anyone was coming ... she took another long breath, because she could not help it, and she held back the swinging curtain of ivy and pushed back the door which opened slowly - slowly ... looking about her and breathing quite fast with excitement, wonder and delight. She was standing *inside* the secret garden. It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine (Hodgson-Burnett, 1983:78-79).

Mary's anticipation of what she might find beyond the locked door is echoed in her breathing. She holds her breath then, with the first amazing sight of the secret garden, her excitement accelerates her heart beat. She just can't believe what she is seeing. It's pure magic - another dimension - another realm.

3.9.Larger than Life:

Other factors make an impact too.

James: When I walked through the door and turned - it was quite imposing just looking at the mummy case (...) maybe ten feet into the air - it was about ten foot high. I was really expecting it to be quite little but it's huge. It made me feel a little shocked because something so big can be bigger than you. For the little children who don't know what it is it

can be quite shocking. It's shocking for us as well.

Zahra: I know what you mean because I thought the mummy case was going to fall on me! It was as if it was going to fall out of the glass.

Staring up at the case, taking in its full two metres, I notice the children look somewhat strained and unsteady. From their short height this coffin is not merely tall, it has a majestic presence which is overbearing.

Zahra: Bella ... w w what did you say earlier about the mummies?

Bella: I said I thought they were going to take me and bury me.

Zahra: It's scary, like that children's programme, what's it called? You know, *Goose-bumps*; and you always think, imagine it's going to come up to you and get you.

James: I thought it was really scary too; I thought there was a real mummy in there and it was going to come alive and grab me.

Zahra: Oh, James don't frighten me any more. My hand's shivering and my picture's really wobbly. Mrs. Thomas can you help me please? I can't do the details because my hand is shaking so much.

Mrs. Thomas: What's the matter, Zahra? Try to calm down. Let me see if I can help.

Zahra: If the case was new and modern I wouldn't feel all shaky because I could see them in Egypt now, but now I can't because they're ancient - it's really unreal and I feel weird.

James: Oh, the hieroglyphs are so hard to draw - I think they are telling a story of how he died and his life but, there are so many, how am I going to fit them all in?

The tone of Zahra's voice alone reveals how anxious she is; sketching is hard enough for her at the best of times but, standing before this enormous coffin makes it far more difficult. James, on the other hand, is petrified of the mummy coming alive and yet, he just can't keep his eyes off the hieroglyphs. Despite trying to copy these intricate shapes, I can tell from the frustration in his face he's run out of space.

3.10 Wonder:

Having finished their sketch of Rameses' feet Harriet and Edward wander over to the mummy case.

Edward: In slides and in books things don't look real (...) it's not as good as when you actually see it in real life and things. Seeing ancient things for real makes me feel like I've never felt before.

Harriet: It makes me think of how, how amazing it is - it makes me feel like it's a real person.

When I hear these comments I start to pay more attention. Edward can't describe his feelings because he's never experienced a real Egyptian coffin before.

Harriet is also overwhelmed by the object's amazing reality which seems to come to life the longer she looks at it.

Zahra: I think its a masterpiece of art-work. You don't see anything of that sort in the twenty first century. You don't see anything that's made now that's that spectacular, or even half that spectacular. It's like I'm dreaming. So, I rub my eyes to wake myself up because I think I'm in a dream, but I'm already awake and in my school uniform - I just can't believe it, I really can't.

James: Yes, I know, because I didn't think there would be real Egyptian things here. I didn't think I was going to see the mummy case and then I did. I can't believe my eyes - the way that the cracks are, the way it's placed - I just can't believe it.

Experiencing an object of this quality defies belief. In fact, Zahra finds it so implausible she instinctively rubs her eyes to check she isn't dreaming. James also feels his eyes are deceiving him; can he really believe what he sees? As I think about this two lines from a poem by Stephen Spender comes to mind. 'You were a child again / Seeing for the first time how things happen' (Spender,1985:76). To capture the quintessential magic of those childhood moments when revelation and excitement are rolled into one is difficult to describe, and yet I instinctively remember how that feels. At this point I notice James and Zahra have still not completed their assignment.

Mrs.Thomas: How are things going now?

Zahra: Better thanks, but I just wanted to ask, do they still bury pharaohs like mummies?

Mrs.Thomas: They don't have pharaohs in Egypt anymore, they have a president instead, Zahra; and as far as I know they don't mummify people.

James: I was just trying to concentrate on the detail and my picture wasn't really right, but it just made me think, how did they do it from scratch?

Mrs.Thomas: I imagine they found some wood, some plaster and some paint to begin with and then measured the size of the mummy and designed the case with his or her life in mind. We can talk about this much more when we go back to school, James.

Within this lively museum atmosphere the children experience a succession of strange sights, sounds and feelings which stimulate their curiosity. Once they start asking questions they can't stop. Like Lewis Carroll's *Alice*, who found everything, 'curiouser and curiouser' (Carroll,1965:23).

James: Mrs. Thomas, when I came in and it was quite dark I thought there might be a little adventure, maybe a secret panel or something.

Mrs. Thomas: Did you, James? That's interesting, perhaps you'll find your secret panel upstairs.

Realizing it's nearly time for the treasure hunt, I ask the children to gather round so they can show one another their sketches and have a brief talk about

the next activity.

Mrs. Thomas: Let's have a look at your picture, James.

3.11 Walking into Egypt:

James: Here's my mummy case. You know, I felt like I was in Egypt when I first saw it.

Harriet: As soon as I came in I had the feeling that I was in Egypt because there was a gush of warm air.

Bella: Well, I had the experience that I was in Egypt because of all the lovely colours.

Zahra: I thought I was actually walking into Egypt when I saw the objects.

Mrs. Thomas: This is fascinating. Tell me, what did it feel like to be walking into Egypt?

The children think about this question. What did it really feel like? Seeing the typically Egyptian objects displayed together for the first time in the 'flesh', moved them to another place; as Edward said:

Edward: Seeing the mummy case for the first time made me feel different. It made me feel as though I was in a different country, not here, and it felt strange.

While I could quite understand how finding oneself in a strange darkened place with ancient Egyptian objects might be very disconcerting, perhaps like starting a new school on the very first day where everything and everybody is unfamiliar, but equally, it might be exciting too. The words of Robert Louis Stevenson's poem, *Travel*, describe an imaginary visit to Egypt.

Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar;
Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile,
There I'll come when I'm a man
With my camel caravan ...
And in a corner find the toys
Of the old Egyptian boys
(Stevenson, 1972:27-29).

As I read these lines I too feel the warmth of the desert sun in my imagination; picture those fearsome blinking crocodiles, and even hear those noisy bazaar vendors pedalling their wares. For me, for Stevenson and the children, it's as if we are *there*.

3.12 Back in Time:

Rahul: I didn't feel that I was in Egypt, but I was imagining that I was actually in the time of the ancient Egyptians. When I saw all the wonderful things I thought it was amazing - just like going back in time.

Zahra: For me it was like stepping into Egyptian time as if I was in a tomb and looking around.

James: It was just like going through the present day back into the time of Egypt.

Being moved or transported to Egypt is articulated by many of the children, but for some, being moved is more like going back in time. Listening to them describe how in imagination they physically moved, stepped and went through time helps me understand how they make this imaginary leap. When Patricia Gilbert passed through the Egyptian countryside for the first time and saw that, 'the donkeys, the bullocks, and the beds outside the houses were the same as in Tutankhamun's time', I could understand how these sights helped her imagination leap back. As she said, 'it was like entering a fairy tale, or an imaginary state' (Gilbert, in *Ancient Egypt*, 2000:36-37). Like Stephen Spender, who writes, 'Such pasts / Are not diminished distances, perspectives / Vanishing points, but doors / Burst open suddenly by gusts / That seek to blow the heart out ...' (Spender, 1985:175). After this brief conversation we hear some of the children making a move. This is our signal to prepare for the treasure hunt on the floor above.

3.13. Moving On - Taking in the Sites/Sights:

The children and I wait patiently while Jane Maxwell's group clatters down the stairs from the top floor. As soon as they burst into the room the children exchange a few brief sentences with one another.

Rahul: What was it like up there, Sam ?

Sam: It was brilliant, and fun - I loved the handling.

Mrs. Thomas: Come along, Rahul, there'll be plenty of time to talk to Sam later.

Shepherding my group through the door I direct the children towards the dark narrow passage-way leading to the staircase. Initially they keep closely together but when they notice the nineteenth century sepia photographs hung on the walls they spread out. Though they have great fun identifying familiar Egyptian sites such as the Pyramids and the Sphinx at Giza, the penultimate picture causes more interest. Here a group of Victorian tourists are attempting to climb the step pyramid at Saqqara.

James: You can just see how big it is because the people are standing on it.

Harriet: It's like when we were on the ground floor; when I saw the big mummy case it felt

like I was tiny.

Staring at these intrepid climbers as they brave the heat and dust of the Egyptian desert in their cumbersome Victorian attire, the children begin to consider feeling their own size and seeing themselves in perspective. How can a pyramid make a person appear like a dwarf? It's perplexing wrestling with thoughts and images which just don't match. As I consider their confusion, part of another Rilke poem comes to my mind.

Karnak. We'd ridden, dinner quickly done with,
Hélène and I, to get the moonlight view.
The dragoman pulled up: the Avenue -
the Pylon, ah! I'd never felt so one with
the lunar world! (Are you being magnified
within me, greatness, then beyond control?)
Is travel - seeking? Well, this was a goal.
The watchman at the entrance first supplied
the frightening scale (Rilke, 1964:78-9).

During his visit to the magnificent temple at Karnak on that beautiful moonlit night, Rilke describes what it's like to feel not merely small and connected, but part of something much greater. As he gazes, he begins to understand what it is like to be brought down to size; how minute he is compared to this ancient architectural wonder, and similarly how insignificant that is when set against the wonder of the universe. However, if the magnificence of Karnak leaves its mark on Rilke, turning the second corner and seeing the main display has a similarly striking effect on the children.

PART FOUR

4.THE TREASURE HUNT²:

4.1 Objects Galore:

Standing in the doorway the children look dazed.

James: These objects make me stop right away. I'm stunned; there must be at least two hundred here. I'm amazed how one person could have collected all these things.

Edward: It's quite incredible how many objects there are, and they're all two thousand years old.

Watching them encounter these myriad objects, all brightly lit, I notice the children stop in their tracks, dizzy with amazement. The sheer variety, beauty and quantity of objects leaves them unsure of how to handle the situation.

Zahra: Yeah, there are lots of turquoise objects as well; I'm overwhelmed.

Physically they seem torn, pulled in all directions; what should they look at first? All the objects seem to be calling out, 'Look at me - look how magnificent and interesting I am'. It's certainly exciting and they can't wait to start exploring, but with so many objects it's difficult to focus, as Harriet says:

Harriet: It's quite hard to concentrate on them all.

Initially we all notice the difference between the two galleries; downstairs there were only four objects in relative gloom, whilst here there are hundreds, all well lit.

Rahul: It's very kind of full - we're just surrounded with all of them in the cases.

Zahra: It makes me feel I'm around them.

As we stand in the midst of the cases I can see from the way the children keep turning around why they feel encircled.

Zahra: It's all so well organised - I can see what it's like; everything really well put in place - really special stuff.

4.2 Hunting:

Mindful of the time constraints, I give out the discovery sheets and ask the children to listen.

Mrs. Thomas: First of all choose one of these cards. Have a good look around to see if you can find the object on your card, then, once you've found it circle the answers to the questions on your sheet. You can also draw your object. Are there any questions before you begin? Right then, off you go.

The children duly collect a card and move freely around the gallery searching for their object. Edward chooses the coffin fragment of the master-builder, Amenhotep³.

Edward: When I first came in the room what hit me first was the statue - it was right in front of my face. I recognised it because it was on the poster. I think it's really eye-opening. It's a shame it's been cut in half. He looks happy though.

Watching him make this connection and seeing his eyes nearly pop out of his head was fascinating.

Rahul: I think it was careless to chop it off and put it into a suitcase, because it's one of the ancient Egyptian things so they shouldn't have chopped it. I expect the people who cut it were quite ashamed.

Harriet: Whoever cut it in half was really strange - did it go over the person when they were buried?

As the children stand and stare at this mutilated object chopped off at the waist with no arms, only one ear and a serene expression, they appear baffled. How

can you reconcile mutilation with what seems to be happiness and composure? Then, after focusing on Amenhotep's face, they creep timidly round the back to see where his mummified body would have been.

Rahul: When you look inside it's black with some hieroglyphs - they really put you back, sort of thing. It's spooky - pretty frightening.

Watching them glimpse the inside of the coffin and listening to their quavering voices makes me wonder if a ghostly image of the master-builder's decomposing corpse is in their minds. It doesn't surprise me therefore, to see that within a moment they start backing away.

4.3 False Expectations:

Once he has turned away from Edward's object, Rahul goes in search of his own. However, though he scans the objects as he moves up and down the aisles he's unsuccessful. Where can it be? He can see what the doll looks on the card but it just doesn't seem to be there.

Rahul: There are so many things I'm getting muddled up - I don't know where to go.

Frowning, lips pursed with frustration, he makes another trip down the first aisle. Then, there at the bottom of the case measuring about seven centimetres, he sees the tiniest doll imaginable. With an audible sigh of relief I hear him say,

Rahul: Hey Harriet, look. I found something really weird, my object looks really big on this card but it's quite small⁴.

Harriet: What's your object, Rahul?

Rahul: This doll. It has blue beaded hair - it looks as if it's made of string.

James: Let's see. Yeah, I'm amazed it's in such good condition.

Rahul: It's really sweet. When I saw the card I thought, how did they do that because it's really tiny and it's been made to look quite big. It's amazing; I think it must have shrunk.

The children gather round the object comparing it to the photograph. As they move around the room with furrowed brows I can read their tense expressions. Why is one large and the other minute?

With the benefit of Rahul's experience, Harriet sets off to look for her object. She is prepared to scrutinise every area of the display just in case it's much smaller than the picture. After a good six or seven minutes she eventually finds the winged scarab.

Harriet: Oh there it is. Zahra, this blue beetle was very hard to find.

Zahra: Really, these two scarabs are nearly the same size as a mouse. I've been looking at them for a long time. When I see something like this I like to go up and have a good look. I can see the tiny details in the wings.

Harriet: Mine has wings.

Zahra: I think it's fascinating; I enjoy it because when we have to draw we can come close to the object.

Harriet: I would love to stay and have a closer look at all the objects.

Entranced by the finely detailed scarabs the girls move imperceptibly towards the case. It's only when their noses touch the cold glass that they become aware of how close they are. At close proximity, questions find answers and things become clearer and more interesting.

4.4 Daydreams:

Although Zahra is fascinated by the scarabs she chooses a turquoise chalice instead⁵. Listening to her conversation with James I am intrigued.

James: What's your object, Zahra?

Zahra: This little blue cup. It's a flower I think, and it's very pretty. I mostly like the turquoise colour because it's my favourite colour.

James: I think they probably took a lot of care making that to get the right shape.

Zahra: When I saw it I felt as if I had gone into a (...) an Egyptian house and they had all the (...) kind of. I think I remember they had a goblet and I thought I was eating ancient Egyptian stuff at a dinner table, really inside an Egyptian house.

James: I had the same as well, a little bit of the same feeling as you except it was different. When I walked into that room I felt like I had, just for a second, I felt like I had just been in a place where the Queen's treasures were taken to the pyramids. I felt like I was in a room full of treasure you know, different kinds of things.

Zahra: In a treasury?

James: I was sure I was in a treasury.

While the chalice's rich colour and elegant curves whisk Zahra away to an imaginary ancient Egyptian house, it's the entire display which moves James to an opulent Egyptian treasury. Listening to the children's detailed descriptions and the sincere tone of their voices, I'm convinced that their experience not only feels real, but it needs no verification.

4.5 Speechless:

As I turn the corner I notice Bella standing motionless in the middle of the second aisle looking at a picture of a gold and carnelian necklace. Edward, who

has already completed his assignment, approaches her and though he tries repeatedly to gain her attention she seems deep in thought. Eventually she responds:

Bella: Hmm - this jewellery has made me feel like a feeling I've never felt before. Seeing these ancient things for the first time in my life for real, it's just a great experience for me.

Edward: What's the feeling like?

Bella: Well, I can't really describe it.

Edward: There are lots of feelings I can't really describe, especially when they are feelings I've only had once and for the first time.

Bella: It's really weird actually; it's kind of hard to explain how I feel.

As I watch this scenario unfold I can appreciate how being mesmerized by the glittering droplets must have made Bella feel. As though roused from a very deep sleep she looks disoriented. Despite the fact she's aware of experiencing something amazing, her thoughts seem to escape her. However, though I expect her to look frustrated, she appears full of equanimity. I wonder whether it's because her experience, though ineffable, was no less 'real'. The poet Rilke explains. 'We are not to know why / this and that masters us; real life makes no reply, / only that it enraptures us / makes us familiar with it' (Rilke,1993:73).

4.6 The Dark:

Realizing half our treasure-hunting time has elapsed I remember I haven't seen James for a while. After a quick search I find him staring at an ancient wooden boat in the adjoining room which houses all the funerary objects.

Mrs. Thomas: Ah, James, here you are. I wondered where you'd gone. Is this the object you were searching for?

James: Yes, Miss. When I saw one like this in a book I thought it was going to be about this big; but when I walked into the room it was on the shelf and it was massive. I think it's really amazing the way they built it.

Hearing James's loud voice the other children open the door very gingerly to see where James is. Eventually, they enter in a very tentative fashion.

Mrs. Thomas: What's the matter? Aren't you going to come in and look at all these funerary objects?

Zahra: It's dark compared to the other room, because the other room is all sunlight and this room's like night-time; it's like we're enclosed in this place. It's sort of gloomy ... you don't know what's coming behind you, or what's coming in front of you, like in a tomb - it's just all dark. Creepy.

Harriet: It's colder, isn't it? Cold and dark. When I came in here on my own ...

Edward: Yeah, and it's so quiet as well. I feel very stupid because it spooks me out.

Rahul: You got really scared, didn't you?

Zahra: Yeah, I felt a spider would get me.

Listening to these comments I can hear and sense their apprehension. I know only too well how darkness and shadows can play tricks with one's imagination, and so I understand why they might want to keep turning round to check who's there.

Edward: At one point there were three of us left in there, and Rahul accidentally sort of brushed next to a plant and Bella turned round; she didn't know what it was and she screamed.

Harriet: When I first came in here, when no one was in here, I thought it was a bit dead because it was dark; and it was like music which is very sad, so I ran back out.

As I explore the funerary objects in this gloomy gallery I can appreciate why many of the children might feel vulnerable and experience an urge to flee. The experience of being scared of the dark, especially at bed-time, is often captured by writers of children's fiction. *Finn's Animal*, is one example.

Some nights when he was in bed, and his mum had said, 'Good night' and closed the door, he could shut his eyes and go to sleep at once and not wake up till morning, and that was fine. But there were other nights when he woke up and saw the curtains shift, just a little, as if someone or something was trying to get in. As the house cooled down at night, the wicker chair with the red cushion on its seat would suddenly creak. Then he'd start wide awake, and strain his eyes to see if something was sitting in the chair, looking at him, waiting for him to move, before it leapt at him (Storr, 1992:7-8).

4.7 Staying or Leaving?

While most of the children feel the need to leave the room, James and Rahul feel somewhat different.

James: I don't know, the atmosphere is quite incredible actually - the darkness kind of sets the scene to give you sort of the calm mood. I feel a bit scared because it's a bit dark but it's fun too. It's pretty good when it's dark with just the light coming up in the cases.

Rahul: When I went into the funeral section I felt weird and excited.

These are unexpected comments and I begin to wonder what it feels like to experience fear and excitement at the same time? The children seem both genuinely distracted and twitchy, and yet rooted to the spot as if captivated. Does their curiosity overpower their fears? Is it like taking part in a potentially hazardous adventure: maybe sailing single-handedly round the world; or even making a trek across a desert - dangerous and yet a thrilling challenge?

Martin Levin, the journalist, writes about his life-time's fascination with Egypt. He says, 'What I loved was the miasmal creepiness, the tombs, the bandages, the sacrilege, the idea of love transmuting through the millennia into murder. But also the utter *otherness* of Egypt; hot sunny, sandy, exotic, worshipful of beetles, jackals and cats, its customs both alien and, eventually, achingly familiar' (Levin, in *Globe and Mail*, 2000:28). Like the children, it isn't merely wonder he feels but fear and repugnance too.

4.8 A Sense of Egypt:

As we stand in a circle I notice the children gradually start to explore the different cases, and I'm struck by how much more confident they seem. However, before they spot the mummified objects James addresses the group.

James: I like it in this darker room because it makes me feel how hot it is in Egypt.

Bella: It makes you feel how Egypt would be under those tunnels and it would be like rotten air, and it's like hard to breathe because it's so hot.

Rahul: I felt quite hot and sweaty when I saw the house.

Harriet: It feels quite humid in here.

Zahra: When I first came in the room it smelt funny. It smelt bad. It smelt a bit weird like it's been in a tomb ... like two thousand years ... it smelt funny.

As I face these ancient Egyptian objects in this small, dark, stuffy space and listen to the children's evocative comments, I too begin to sense an aura of Egypt, and imagine what the sweaty, musty, and breathless conditions of that eastern land feel like. Seamus Heaney's poem, *Seeing Things*, describes a particularly sultry, heat-hazy afternoon; he writes, 'All afternoon, heat wavered on the steps / And the air we stood up to our eyes in wavered / Like the zig-zag hieroglyph for life itself' (Heaney, 1991:17). That feeling of being swamped or practically submerged in heat - as Heaney puts it, 'up to our eyes in', can indeed make it difficult to breathe.

Seeing photographs of the Pyramids, the Sphinx, and objects like the Nile funerary boat, also remind the children of the desert.

Rahul: It was like I was really back in Egypt when it was night-time, so it felt as if when the sand blew away or something

Edward: It felt like I was in Egypt and it was like it was made of sand and muck clay and I was in Egypt.

As I consider the children's comments I tell them about two books which feature the Egyptian desert. In Penelope Lively's novel, *Oleander, Jacaranda*, she relates how the desert felt to her as a young child living in Egypt. She writes:

I knew the desert of course. It was a place to which you went to have picnics. You drove out into it and searched out an overhang or a depression or somewhere out of the wind and with a shred of shade ... I liked the desert. It was mysterious, apparently endless, and filled with treasure: little succulent plants, strange spiny trees, the trails of snakes and small creatures embroidered upon the sand. The solitary figures of Bedouin trekking along the skyline. Wind-rippled slopes down which you could roll. The desert, for me, meant Marmite sandwiches, milk in a Thermos and rewarding exploration (Lively,1994:65).

And, in Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*, he tells us what it is like to experience the dangers of an Egyptian sandstorm. He says:

Hours later we were in a sandstorm that hit us out of clear morning, coming from nowhere. The breeze that had been refreshing had gradually strengthened. Eventually we looked down and the surface of the desert was changed ... The sand leaps in little spurts and whirls. Inch by inch the disturbance rises as the wind increases its force. It seems as if the whole surface of the desert were rising in obedience to some upthrusting force beneath. Larger pebbles strike against the shins, the knees and the thighs. The sand-grains climb the body till it strikes the face and goes over the head. The sky is shut out, all but the nearest objects fade from view, the universe is filled. We had to keep moving. If you pause sand builds up as it would around anything stationary, and locks you in. You are lost forever (Ondaatje,1992:136-7).

With these thoughts racing around in their minds the children's attention is drawn towards the first glass case on the right which displays the mummified exhibits.

4.9 Experiencing the Mummies:

As they pore over the mummified kitten, falcon and dormouse, they suddenly notice a diminutive human hand.

Harriet: It's strange looking at a somebody's hand that isn't alive anymore. It's disgusting - it's black and wrinkled and it makes me shiver.

James: Oh, the best thing of all is the mummified hand; I'm amazed to see it.

Edward: When I look at it, it's all green and I can see the germs inside from where it's been cut off. It freaks me out - it makes me feel ill; it's really scary.

Zahra: It gives me the creeps. It's all curled up and horrible. It makes me feel sick.

These varied comments interest me. Clearly, seeing this severed hand is disturbing and scary, but it's also amazing. Why is it isolated and unattached? How was it removed from its arm? Seeing it lie curled up at such close quarters it's possible to see the bones, tendons and ancient flesh, dried up and lifeless, so

I'm not surprised when I see the children begin to look pale and shaky and hear them complain of feeling ill. For James it's different though, he seems able to appreciate the hand aesthetically; for him it has none of those gruesome qualities, on the contrary, he finds its delicately formed fingers and its petite size fascinating.

James: Looking at the hand you think ... how did it get so small, it's smaller than mine? It's amazing that the Egyptians could make a person's body preserved for over three thousand years.

As I consider James's comments, I'm reminded of a brief extract from a memoir written by Mary Montgomery. She describes her childhood memories of looking at an ancient mummified hand with her brothers. She writes:

Among other small things to be seen in the glass cabinet, there is one particularly memorable and fascinating object we like to examine. This is a mummified hand brought back by my grandparents from the tombs of Egypt. It rests within a glass-covered box on a bed of cotton wool. The beautiful black hand appears more like an ebony carving than a truly human hand. It is slender and graceful, with long tapered fingers, timelessly preserved to retain their form. We wonder what story is forever hidden with this box. Could this extraordinary keepsake be the hand of an Egyptian princess? We gaze at it respectfully, with awe and wonder. Perhaps this might be the hand of the Egyptian princess who, in one of my favourite Bible stories, came to the river to bathe and found the baby Moses hidden in a basket. The question remains unanswered. Now Grandmother returns the hand to its shelf again. It is locked safely away in the cabinet until another year, when we shall marvel at it once more (Montgomery, 1990:27-28).

Like James, Mary feels privileged to experience this unusual object; she marvels at it and looks forward to seeing it again, No fearful thoughts enter her head; no monstrous ideas occur to her, only questions and fanciful notions about who had once owned it.

With the discussion moving on to the mummified animals and the practice of mummification, similar, conflicting feelings are expressed.

Harriet: The dormouse in its own coffin is cute but also creepy - I can't believe they mummified dormice; actually I'm a bit amazed.

Rahul: Well, the mummified bird in there - the falcon - I didn't think it would look like that at all.

James: I liked the mummified kitten it was so tiny - it was cute. I like finding out about the mummified things, it's the first chance I've had.

Edward: The mummified cat's disgusting it also looks like a walking stick - it doesn't look like a cat with all the bandages on - it's really, really strange. I wouldn't think they could squeeze it up that small.

Bella: They must have been a bit nasty because I don't know how you can get a cat into a parcel about that sort of size. I'm frightened they might do it to my dog when he dies. If

you think that they actually mummified things and did things like that then it's a bit scary. I wouldn't like these things to happen to me.

While it's interesting to know about mummification practices, it's another thing to consider them being practised on human beings or a pet. In the following passage from, J. D. Salinger's, *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden, the main character, shows two young children the way to the Egyptian galleries in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Finally we found the place where the mummies were, and we went in.

'You know how the Egyptians bury their dead?' I asked the one kid.

'Naa'.

'Well you should. It's very interesting. They wrapped their faces up in these cloths that were treated with some secret chemical. That way they could be buried in their tombs for thousands of years and their faces wouldn't rot or anything. Nobody knows how to do it except the Egyptians. Even modern science'.

To get to where the mummies were, you had to go down this very narrow sort of hall with stones on the side that they'd taken right out of the Pharaoh's tomb and all. It was pretty spooky, and you could tell the two hot-shots I was with weren't enjoying it too much. They stuck close as hell to me, and the one that didn't talk at all practically was holding on to my sleeve. 'Let's go', he said to his brother. 'I seen 'em awreddy. C'mon, hey.' He turned around and beat it (Salinger,1958:183).

Although the two boys edge nearer to the teenager for protection in that narrow space, they eventually make a hasty exit imagining how awful the mummies might be.

As I watch most of the children wince and screw up their faces, I can understand how they might find the notion of dissecting and mutilating a human body or an animal abhorrent.

4.10 Compassion for the Dead:

Having considered these feelings my attention is aroused when they say:

Bella: I feel sorry for all the people who died in the funeral section.

Zahra: I feel sad for them too - because, when you get wrapped up sometimes you like feel cold and sometimes you feel warm. I feel sorry for them dying because they were so small.

Becoming aware of the quieter, more emotional tone of their voices, and noticing the sadness in their eyes, I can detect that the girls feel sympathy for the plight of these ancient beings. Their apparent sincerity lacks none of the compassion they might express if the deceased were a close friend or relative. Even though the children may well have seen harrowing media images of death from natural disasters, war or terrorism, witnessing *real* dead mummified

exhibits is quite a different matter.

4.11 'Real Live' Objects:

While I listen to Bella and Zahra, the rest of the group explore a selection of rare wooden objects, including a large statue of Mesehty⁶, an Egyptian governor with his stick of office, and a display of shabtis⁷.

Rahul: That stick felt as if it was going to shoot out of caves and stuff and bite me. It made me feel scared. It made me think it was going to jump on me.

Harriet: I thought ugh ... scary ... because it felt like it was just lying there and it wanted to grab someone.

Bella: The models of the servants, the little models upstairs, I think they're going to come alive, and come and bury me. That's what happened in one of my dreams once, and they did come alive.

Harriet: You can just touch the boxes and you still feel them ... it's like they're alive; and you've just got this thing in your head that they're alive, and they keep staring at you, and when you touch the box you can just feel them vibrating ... just vibrating.

When the children experience these objects for the very first time they seem stunned. Could such extraordinarily life-like objects metamorphose into living, breathing beings capable of grabbing, kicking, biting or even jumping on them? The thought is quite terrifying and it puts me in mind of how I shuddered with horror on reading a short children's poem entitled, *The Mummy*.

In the darkness of the sepulchre
beneath the shifting sands,
the mummy stirs within its sheath
of rotten linen bands.
Inside its stone sarcophagus
beneath the pyramid,
it moves its cloth-enshrouded hands
and pushes back the lid
(Prelutsky, 1984:6,9).

4.12 The Mummy 'Heads'⁸ - Being Under Surveillance:

However, moving around the corner there are even more surprises. Not having discovered the curious plaster mummy 'heads' for myself, I follow the children who are keen to tell me what they've found.

Rahul: They look real scary things because they don't blink so they are just staring at you. There are so many faces I don't know where I am.

Edward: I feel scared as well really ... they are very stern, scary-looking.

Zahra: I'm not sure what they're for. I get creeped out because they seem to watch you from wherever you were. They make me feel very, very - how can I say? creepy, strange, strange.

James: Yeah, you look at a head and you turn away and then it's there again looking at you... their eyes follow you, are all over you - and it's pretty scary.

Harriet: You walk one way and it looks like they've moved their eyes to where you're standing, and then you move another way and they've moved their eyes again or something. It's like when you're in an old house you see those portraits hanging up from the walls and you think, 'Oh my gosh, it's looking at me'.

When the children describe how the mummy 'heads' affect them I am intrigued. But yes, as I focus, I find that they do indeed have very serious expressions, and that their beady eyes are 'all over me', sticking like glue. In fact, the longer I look the deeper they seem to penetrate - almost as if they are reading my mind and violating my privacy. Whilst under their surveillance I feel so closely monitored I feel pinned to the spot unable to escape. After this experience I can certainly understand how the children feel. At that moment I hear rumblings on the stairs, and realize our time is up.

Mrs. Thomas: Put your cards back children we need to move on.

PART FIVE

5. THE HANDLING SESSION⁹ :

Exactly on cue we make our way up to the second floor where the Education Officer is waiting.

Education Officer: When you come in children go to the table and sit down. You will find a pair of plastic gloves in front of you. Put these on first of all and then I will tell you what we are going to do. If anyone needs help with their gloves just let me know. How are you managing?

Harriet: My gloves are difficult to open; they're sticking together.

Education Officer: Let me see. Right - if I rub the plastic together sometimes that makes them easier to open. There we are - that's done it.

The children sit around the table looking at six curious objects on a wooden tray.

Education Officer: Now, let me explain what we're going to do this morning. In a moment I'm going to ask you to become detectives. What do detectives do?

Zahra: They find burglars, Miss.

Education Officer: Yes - how do they do that?

Harriet: They look around and ask people questions, Miss.

Education Officer: That's right. What are they looking for?

Zahra: They look for clues.

Education Officer: OK - they look for clues to solve crimes. We're not trying to solve a crime, but we are trying to find clues about the ancient Egyptians from the objects they left behind. Join up with the person sitting on your left, and when I give you the objects look for

clues to find out what they're made of and what they might have been used for. When you've done this you can tell everyone what you have found, and we'll have a discussion about each object. Remember to keep the objects on the table, children.

Edward: You could improve this by putting shelves in and more objects, then we could walk around feeling and looking with our gloves on and in the end say our favourite object and tell you about it.

Education Officer: That would be a good idea if we had a very large handling collection, but unfortunately we only have six objects.

5.1 Taking Responsibility:

Zahra: I'm a bit scared in case I touch something and it just disintegrates. When I sort of picked it up I thought I was going to drop it because it had loads of cracks in and I thought it was going to slip out of my hands.

Bella: Yeah, I was thinking, oh no, what's going to happen if I accidentally drop it or anything?

James: I'm holding them tight not to drop them. We have a responsibility, and I'm thinking, wow, you know, these really belonged to people so many years ago, so we have to take care of them. I feel kind of precious, and I don't move them too much because they were someone's prime possessions.

While the children look fixedly at the objects, turning them around cautiously with their fingers¹⁰, I can sense they feel edgy and awkward - as if one false move might bring disaster. There's a dilemma here - on the one hand they want to hold them sufficiently tightly to protect them, but on the other, holding tightly might make them break. What's worse, if anything does go wrong they fear they'll be in trouble.

I can sense the responsibility of taking care of these ancient, irreplaceable objects weighs heavily on the children. As James said, 'You feel kind of precious'. It sounds strange to hear him say this. Didn't he mean to say that the objects were precious? When I think about it perhaps he feels precious because he feels privileged or special when he holds these wonderful objects. He wants to hold them tightly because they're valuable. While the children feel apprehensive about dropping the objects they also feel a tremendous sense of amazement. Initially I listen to Rahul and James who are touching the canopic jar lid¹¹ and an eye from a mummy mask.

5.2 Amazing to Touch:

James: It feels really weird because you would never have thought you would be able to do that in your whole life ... and then you see everything you could dream of. It's just amazing.

Rahul: It's amazing because we're allowed to handle these Egyptian objects. I never thought I

would get to touch a real lid of a canopic jar.

Although the children knew they were going to handle the objects they're unprepared for what lies ahead. Initially, as they face the six unusual objects I can detect a real sense of surprise and shock at the prospect of being *allowed* to touch. When we have visited other museums and galleries touching has been prohibited. Usually there are big bold notices saying, 'DO NOT TOUCH', and officious warders keeping watch to enforce the rules. Having this chance takes some getting used to. Just at that moment Zahra calls me over to her side of the table where she and Edward are looking at a quaint china figure and a cat's death mask.

Zahra: Mrs. Thomas, when we touch them and it's like, wow! it's amazing just - it's just amazing just touching some Egyptian things. It sort of overwhelms me.

Edward: To see and even to touch these amazing artefacts is incredible. I can't believe that I'm actually touching some Egyptian things.

To consider the idea of touching is one thing, but to *actually* touch is another - it's astonishing; these authentic artefacts are just too good to be true. Furthermore, the great age of the objects and their miraculously fine state of preservation seem to contribute to these feelings.

Harriet: When I had the gloves on I just thought, am I touching it, is it real? And I just couldn't believe it. Actually seeing them in true life is amazing.

Bella: And actually they were the real ones, they weren't like fake, they were actually the real ones, because sometimes in places you can feel the fake ones and think what they really feel like but these are the actual real ones so you could really feel what they felt like.

Overhearing these comments, the other children contribute to the discussion.

Rahul: I'm too amazed to think about anything really. I can't believe that I'm touching something two thousand years old.

Zahra: Yeah, the mask, because it's just amazing touching something from five thousand years ago. It's amazing that they're still intact.

5.3 Being 'In Touch':

Bella: I can't believe that I'm holding something that could have been in an ancient Egyptian's hand five thousand years ago and it's in my hands now.

Harriet: Yeah, I thought, wow, I'm actually holding something which well, an important - quite an important Egyptian person had actually put his head on.

Edward: This might have been next to a mummy so this is pretty amazing.

It's at this point that I realize how touching the objects seems to draw the

children closer to the ancient Egyptians in more ways than one.

Edward: When I hold the artefact it feels cold and just, you know this feeling is what it would be like if I were an ancient Egyptian myself.

Bella: It makes me feel that I'm an Egyptian girl just handling everyday things.

Harriet: It sort of feels as if you've been taken back in time because ... you're feeling them and you know what they would have been used for.

It's not merely that the children feel old or ancient, but rather that they feel imaginatively/magically transformed into Egyptians living in that ancient time, going about their daily routine using the objects; maybe relaxing on the headrest, for example. However, what is even more startling is the feeling which links the children to the ancient Egyptians themselves. Touching the object is like holding hands with the person who owned it or made it. It's as if there's a thread tying the children to the ancients, as if they can now say, 'I know how you felt'.

Considering these feelings reminds me of Penelope Lively's children's novel, *A Stitch in Time*. In this book Maria, a young girl, discovers a sampler of a house which looks familiar.

It was still in her head as she crossed over the road - its stiffly stitched flowers and that leaping black cross-stitch dog, and the swing and the urns and the plump cushiony shape of the tree at the bottom. Quercus Ilex, the Holm Oak. Because she thought with a sudden gush of interest, that's my tree, I'm sure it is ... It's the same shape, and the same very dark green, and the same fat trunk and branches. And the house is the same house. But there are no urns now, and no swing, and for some reason the house is a different colour. White, not brown ... And here was she, Maria, standing looking at it on an August evening just as the girl who made the sampler - what was her name, Harriet? - must have done once, a long time ago. Harriet is like the ammonites in the rock, she thought, not here any more but here in a ghostly way, because of the things she left behind, And it came to her, as she turned to go into the house, that places are like clocks. They've got all the time in them there's ever been, everything that's happened. They go on and on, with things that have happened hidden in them, if you can find them, like you find the fossils if you break the rock (Lively, 1976:36-37).

Can it be that, just as Maria felt 'in touch' with Harriet, the young Victorian seamstress, when she handles the sampler stitched all those years ago, so the children feel 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians through their objects?

5.4 Ancientness:

Once the initial amazement of touching the objects has passed, the children start looking for clues. Edward and Zahra begin by scrutinising the little shabti.

Zahra: I've never touched things of ancient Egypt or been that close up to them. I enjoy it because we can pick it up and have a good close look. It's the detail on it - even though we've got gloves on it's still amazing that we are very nearly touching it; we're handling it so it's breath-taking really.

Edward: When I touch the statue I feel so old, like olden times; like I'm from ancient Egypt.

Zahra: Yeah, I feel ancient - because they are so old and I've never touched one before - so I feel ancient for some reason.

As I watch the children bend over the object, examining its shiny surface I can see their eyes sparkle. Making contact with this ancient object and puzzling over the hieroglyphs inscribed on its body is having quite an effect on them; it's as if its great age is somehow channelled through their fingers making them feel ancient too. Is this a sense of feeling decrepit, or an empathic response, as if one actually exists in that time? Seamus Heaney evokes this feelings too; he writes, 'I was four but I turned four hundred maybe/ Encountering the ancient dampish feel / Of a clay floor. / Maybe four thousand even (Heaney,1991:100). Despite Heaney's tender years, his intimate contact with the floor's cold, damp earthiness immediately communicated a sense of primordial age.

5.5 Touching can be Surprising, Fascinating and Curious:

As the children become absorbed in their detective work they find out that the objects are not quite what they seem.

James: The canopic jar lid is amazing actually because someone's insides have been in the jar. It's loads bigger that I expected it to be.

Rahul: It makes me feel amazed because I didn't think there would be that much texture on something that had been dried out in the sand and then touched and all ...

Zahra: It's hard to realize that that's what it is. It doesn't feel like or look like it was a mask. Yeah, the mask - I thought it would be a little bit soft from the way that our skin is soft and everything, and a cat's skin is soft.

Edward: I wondered what it's made from because it looks like a death mask. I'm actually quite surprised what it was made from.

Hearing these comments I start to think. Prior to the handling session the children had only touched the feet of Rameses II. However, once they begin feeling the texture, weight and shape of the objects they find that some of their original impressions are flawed which is surprising. This isn't a shocking feeling however, but rather a sense of bewilderment which in a natural way leads to feelings of curiosity and fascination. They are eager to find out as much

as they can not only about the objects, but about the people who made and used them.

Having spent some time investigating their objects, the children take it in turns to tell the rest of the group what they have discovered, and a discussion ensues.

Harriet: Well it's like you're holding the objects and you know they're from somebody in the ancient Egyptian times, but it's mystifying of whose they are and you'd like to know whose they are.

Bella: One of our objects is a bit strange; it's hard to recognize.

James: Well, feeling the lid - I wonder if a part of a pharaoh's body was in the jar with this lid on. I enjoy being a detective touching the objects and finding things like clues and what they were made from.

While James recognises his object, Harriet and Bella are most intrigued with one of theirs. Apart from wondering who had owned it they are completely baffled about its use. As they turn it over they jump with shock as it falls with a clatter into three pieces on the table¹².

Bella: Oh, I'm sorry I've knocked it over.

Mrs. Thomas: Don't worry, Bella, we can soon put it back together.

Was it made to come to pieces, or did it just come apart because the glue had dried out over the centuries? As I hastily fit it together again the children still look puzzled. Why is the top piece shaped in a curve? 'Could it be a stand for bananas?' Harriet suggests. Bella keeps stroking the curve as if feeling might encourage her brain to work. It's at this point that she thinks she has the answer;

Bella: It looks more like ... a bit like a very small seat really.

Could it be a seat? Although the other children don't seem very convinced, she is adamant that it has something to do with the body. Despite the mystery, she still feels stimulated and wants to keep testing one clue after another. It's such good fun. When Edward suggests it might be a headrest there is a great sigh of relief; it's as if he's supplied a vital piece of a jigsaw puzzle which makes sense of a picture.

At this juncture I realise the time is running out, so I urge Zahra and Edward to talk about their object. Focusing intently on a small but very heavy, greeny black cat's head, they begin.

Zahra: It's fascinating because I've never seen them - all the artefacts are so cool, because

the cat goddess thing - I had a puzzle before we went - I thought it was going to be really big but it was that small so I went, wow!

Edward: I like looking at the head of the cat, Bast or Bastet. It's fascinating looking at the holes in her ears.

The more Zahra looks the more she seems absorbed in the object, and the more absorbed she becomes the more questions seem to occur. Its ears are particularly captivating. 'Why would a cat's head have a hole in its ear?' she ponders. Edward stares at the cat entranced by this feature; he remembers he's seen other Egyptian cats with earrings. But, 'why is the head so heavy? why is it hollow? what would have gone inside?' The others conjecture that it might be a death mask for a cat, but then that is rejected because it seems so small. Surely a cat's head wouldn't fit inside. In the end they decide that perhaps it could be a kitten's death mask instead.

As I consider the children's fascination, a few remarks from a review of the exhibition written by an Etonian scholar, strike a chord with me.

Walking round the exhibition I found myself moved, fascinated and enlightened. I was struck by many of the more fabulous exhibits, like the afterlife models and the plaster portrait masks ... but it was probably the quietest objects that I found gripping (Neicho, in *The Eton Chronicle*, 1999:21).

This sense of being *gripped* by the objects seems to characterize the boy's fascination. It's not merely that they are interesting, but more that they hold him under their spell. Patricia Gilbert too, writing of her first visit to Egypt, describes her own fascination. She says, 'One visit, two visits : it's not enough. If I went every year for the rest of my life I still wouldn't see or learn enough, and that's its fascination' (Gilbert, in *Ancient Egypt*, 2000:37).

5.6 Touching Helps One Learn:

As I watch the children touch, probing the surfaces of each object, I notice how intensely interested and excited they seem.

Rahul: It's really exciting, kind of exciting to actually see objects - and to see everyone else's shabti, headrest, glass eyes, cat's head and we had like a top of the jar and ... I feel so excited about touching something that an Egyptian might have touched.

Harriet: Well, it made me use all my senses to figure out how this was used and why it was used - I looked and I thought and then well ... that eye that I picked up was quite cool.

Rahul: I wonder what their way of life was really like. I don't know how the Egyptians survived the heat. Did they live very long? Did they brush their teeth? Why did they like the colour blue? I think it's brilliant because you learn new stuff and it's just like wow, I've

never been here before.

James: Yeah, you have to let your mind work. Even though we have learned a lot I still feel there's a lot to learn about the Egyptians. It's more exciting; it's more challenging.

Initially, the task of finding out about these unfamiliar objects seems daunting, and yet, once they start they become totally absorbed. In fact, the more they touch the more they want to touch. With each second that passes new information seems to come their way helping them to construct theories and test them out. As they talk about their ideas I begin to wonder how many of them will value this 'hands on' approach to learning.

5.7 Touching Death:

Part of the children's interest in finding out about the objects centres around the ancient Egyptian practice of mummification and, when I look at the six objects on the table, it dawns on me that each one of them would have been used in this process. James echoes my thoughts.

James: The canopic jar - ugh! It's the one that you put the lid on, that made me feel - I shivered because of all of the stuff: it was going to be really gross if they touched the stuff inside it. I was a bit scared because I thought it would give me nightmares.

Rahul: It was to put the organs in ... ugh! But I mean, like the intestines and things like that; you're thinking Ugh, I'm sticking my hands in here ... I mean I'm feeling, and you're thinking to yourself well, you have to overcome your fear because you're never going to do this again.

When the Education Officer hears the children express these feelings she goes round the table asking the others to see how they feel.

Edward: I thought it was very sick the way they took out their insides and put in stuff like ...

Zahra: I had the little shabti as well. It was quite strange really because I was touching something that has been in a tomb with a person.

Although it would have been interesting to explore these feelings, when I notice the Education Officer look at her watch, I realize we will have to continue this discussion at school.

5.8 On the Move - Back to the Beginning:

Education Officer. I'm sorry children we've run out of time. Please place the objects back in the tray and take off your gloves. Then make a line by the door and Mrs. Thomas will take you downstairs.

Mrs. Thomas: Go steadily children. Wait for me and we'll go down together.

Bella: Mrs. Thomas, when you look down the stairs it looks like a long drop.

Mrs. Thomas: Yes, you're right Bella, it does look a long way down. Hold on to the bannister, children.

Zahra: The first time I was feeling like I was going to fall down.

Mrs. Thomas: Just hold on tightly and you'll be quite safe.

As we reach the ground floor we see the other children queuing up to buy mementos from the shop¹³. The noise is deafening as they share their experiences with one another.

Edward: What I like about the shop is that you can get postcard and rubbers; I like the posters but I want to get a rubber instead because I only have £2 so I got two rubbers, a mummy one and a beetle - a scarab.

Mrs. Thomas: I'm glad you've managed to buy something to help you remember your visit, Edward.

After all the purchases have been made the children go to the toilets before we set off on our return journey. The Education Officer escorts us to our coach then, having thanked her and waved goodbye, we make our journey back to school. Within moments the children's lunch boxes are snapped opened and the smell of bananas, oranges, crisps and biscuits waft around the coach.

PART SIX

6. AFTERWARDS - REFLECTIONS:

Once the children finish their snacks the noise level increases as they begin to compare notes of their experiences. Sitting behind me Harriet and her friend Elizabeth talk about the visit.

Harriet: I would love to go again and touch some more wonderful, fascinating, interesting things about Egypt.

Elizabeth: Yeah, I wish we were there for longer. I wanted more time because it was so interesting. I don't want to go back to school.

Within half an hour the school is in sight and, before I know it, the children have disembarked and are lining up by the school gates.

Mrs. Thomas: Children, once you have taken all your belongings to the classroom you can go out to the playground and have twenty minutes play.

At the end of playtime the children settle down in their places and I ask them for their views.

6.1 Enjoyment and Satisfaction:

Mrs. Thomas: First of all children, tell me about how you felt about the visit as a whole.

Harriet: My favourite bit was when I first stepped into the treasure hunt room because it was interesting to see all those real life things. It was excellent and I want to see it again.

Edward: I loved touching the objects because it's more fun than just looking at them; because in shops you're always saying, 'Oh, Mum, can I touch that?' and she says, 'No!' But here, you can touch the stuff and feel what they felt like and see how they were made.

Zahra: I enjoyed touching the objects because they were older than my grandad's grandad's grandad! When you see really old things it makes you go to a mysterious mind - dreams, daydreams inside your head.

Hearing these comments I am left in no doubt that the children had a good time. However, despite the fact that there were many more objects to see than touch, being able to touch seems to have made the most significant impact on the children.

6.2 Feeling Privileged and Special:

Zahra: I felt quite proud that I had held something that was from loads of years ago and that nobody in my family had done it.

Zahra's pride is clearly based on valuing the experience very highly and, like many of the other children, she feels privileged.

Edward: When my partner and I touched the servant I was fascinated. It was then I realized how privileged I was. It was very special because I'll never get another chance to touch Egyptian artefacts.

James: It was like really special cause it's like once in a life-time opportunity. I probably will never be able to touch another really ancient object again.

Of course, the children were lucky to visit the exhibition on their own without being jostled by the general public. But, more than this, to have touched such rare objects was a unique, experience. In fact, I sensed a strong urge to make the most of the opportunity myself.

6.3 Gratitude:

Mrs. Thomas: Right children, I think it would be a good idea to write to the Education Officer to thank her for showing us around the exhibition and organizing the activities; perhaps you could also tell her how you felt about the visit. Harriet, kindly give out the paper please.

For the next half an hour the children settle down to write occasionally coming up to me for words like 'Egyptian', 'exhibition' and 'treasure' which they found difficult to spell. Three of them wrote:

Dear Education Officer,
Thank you for having us I liked everything in a special way. I also loved touching the cat's head with my friend. I thought it was fabulous. From, Zahra.

Dear Education Officer,

Thank you ever so much for telling us about the Egyptians and Egypt. The best part was when you let us handle the objects and be detectives. Thank you for letting us look around the exhibition, it was brilliant. I think that the ancient Egyptians are one of the most strangest and most fun subjects I could ever learn, Love, James.

Dear Education Officer,

It was one of the best days that I have ever had, I felt very lucky and happy to be at the museum. I couldn't believe that I held an object of a thousand years old. I liked the treasure hunt as well. I love my poster; it is hanging above my bed. From, Harriet.

Later that day I read through the children's letters which were full of gratitude. The process of encountering ancient Egyptian objects had stimulated both the children's curiosity about the ancient Egyptians, and encouraged them to explore their emotions too.

I also found the visit educational. I had not only been able to touch the objects myself but found a real fascination for the ancient Egyptians through the children's experiences. I was constantly surprised by their responses, and with this food for thought, I left the museum feeling far more in touch with my own pupils.

6.4 Lasting Impressions

As I fixed the stamp to the envelope and popped it into the post box on the way home that evening I began to reflect. The day had been exhausting, yes, but above all, it had captured our imagination, filled us with wonder and opened our eyes to a people and a civilisation which would have a lasting appeal. Two brief quotes encapsulate these feelings:

Irt-irw was the first mummy I ever saw, at the age of 5 or 6, and I can still remember the awe, terror and curiosity she evoked in me. Egyptology has been an abiding passion ever since, and so I owe a debt of gratitude to Irt-irw (Bibby, in *Ancient Egypt*, 2000:16).

Dear Education Officer:

Thank you for letting us look around the exhibition and letting us handle very delicate objects. It all comes to your head, and it just stays in your brain from what you've touched ... that was wonderful - really good. I don't think I'll ever forget it. From Rahul.

Notes:

1. The children's statements used in this chapter come from two sources namely, letters and audio-taped interviews. While emphases, pauses, silences and indecipherable speech are shown in the interview transcripts, the letters appear exactly as the children wrote them. The following key to the interview transcripts can be seen below:

Key

(.) (..) (...)	pauses of increasing length
(Pause)	indicates silence
<u>Underlined words</u>	indicate emphases
oooooooo	indicates indecipherable speech

2. For illustrations of the objects used in the Treasure Hunt see pp.103 - 107.
3. This fragment (ref. fig. 3.7), comprised the top half of the front section of a mummy case. One theory claims that the entire object was sawn in half to allow it to be transported in a suit-case; most probably by a collector. For an illustration see p.105.
4. For an illustration of this ancient doll (ref. fig. 4.7) see p.148.
5. For an illustration of this chalice (ref. fig. 3.13) see p.107.
6. For an illustration of the model of Mesehty (ref. fig. 3.8) see p.105.
7. The small shabti models, many of which were made out of bright blue faïence, were placed in tombs to act as servants for the mummy in the after-life.
8. For an illustration of the 'Mummy Heads' (ref. fig. 5.12) see p.222.
The term mummy 'head' was coined by the children as a way of differentiating between the cartonnage mummy masks displayed on the ground floor, and the plaster variety on the first floor.
9. The Handling Collection consisted of: a headrest (ref. fig. 3.20); a kitten's death mask (ref. fig.3.18); a shabti (ref. fig. 3.16); a canopic jar lid (ref. fig.3.19), and a pair of inlaid eyes (ref. fig.3.17). See all these illustrations on pp. 108 - 110.
10. For some illustrations of a class of children as they used the Handling Collection see (ref. figs. 5.14 - 5.18) pp. 223 - 225.
11. During the process of mummification most of the vital organs (liver, lungs, stomach and intestines) of the body were removed with the exception of the heart. These were then dried, stored in four containers known as canopic jars, and buried alongside the mummy in a coffin or tomb. The heart was weighed against a feather during a ritual entitled 'The Weighing of the Heart Ceremony' and hence needed to be left in the body. If the heart weighed more than the feather the mummy would be prevented from entering the afterlife.
12. This headrest had originally been made in three pieces which would have been glued together. Over the centuries the glue had dried out, so that when the children handled it it often toppled over and came to pieces. This led them to believe they were responsible for breaking it, when in fact all they had revealed was its instability and the secret of its making.
13. For an illustration of some children buying merchandise from the Museum shop see (ref. fig. 5.19) p.226.

Introduction

In this chapter, which sets out to provide an interpretation of the children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects, I identify a number of shared themes or commonalities, in order to draw out the meanings of the experience using the four phenomenological existentials. Max van Manen (1990), explains how these can provide a framework for human science research. He maintains:

All phenomenological human science research efforts are really explorations into the structures of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations. Our lived experiences and the structures of meanings (themes) in terms of which these lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld ... And so we know that the lifeworld of the child has different experiential qualities from the lifeworld of the adult ... In order not to confuse these fundamental lifeworld themes with the more particular themes of certain human phenomena ... we shall refer to these fundamental lifeworld themes as 'existentials'. There are four existentials that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality) ... these four existentials can be differentiated but not separated (van Manen, 1990:101,106).

As I focused on the existential, *Lived Space*, I uncovered three common themes which characterized how the children experienced the objects within the context of the museum. These were first, what it was like to feel entombed, buried or trapped in the dark; second, what it was like to feel scared and yet excited in the dark; and third, what it felt like to be transported to Egypt in both a haptic and imaginary sense.

When I began to examine the *Lived Body* dimension, I also found three themes. While two of these were complex, describing what it was like to feel stunned/amazed, and what it felt like to face death, specifically when experiencing funerary or mummified exhibits; the third theme explored what it was like to feel both scared and yet excited in the presence of those macabre artefacts.

In the *Lived Time*, or the temporal dimension of the experience, there were also three themes. Here, the children described their imaginative experiences of first, what it felt like, 'to move back in time', or specifically to, 'be in ancient

Egyptian time'; second, what it was like 'to feel old and ancient' themselves; and third, what the quality of 'ancientness' felt like when the objects were touched.

Finally, in the *Lived Human Relations* section, I identified four common themes from the children's descriptions: namely, what it was like to experience *real* objects, and feel threatened when they seemed to come alive. What it was like to feel 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians, through a sense of admiration for their skills as craftsmen/women, and compassion for their demise. And what it was like to feel a sense of responsibility, privilege and gratitude for the experience of seeing and touching ancient Egyptian objects.

As I use these thematic and existential parameters to explore the experiential meanings of this encounter, I will not only use data from my observations of the children's behaviour and their interviews and letters, but will draw upon real and fictional accounts of lived experience and a number of phenomenological texts.

LIVED SPACE

Underpinning our sense of being is the notion that we are always somewhere. 'The human body is the medium through which people gain their understanding of the world, yet this always takes place from a position of being bound to the world and saturated by it' (Thomas,1996:87). Thomas's quotation, which acts as a reminder that space is fundamental to our existence, also helps to direct my analysis to the spatial dimension of the children's experience.

During the research, as I watched the children move in and through this unfamiliar, variably-lit environment full of Egyptian antiquities, I became increasingly aware of the continual spatial adjustments they were forced to make. When I reflected on this and began to question what it is like to experience space itself, I found this quotation from Merleau-Ponty (1962), helpful. He suggests:

Space is not a setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible. This means that instead of imagining it as a sort of ether in which all things float, or conceiving it abstractly as a characteristic that they have in common, we must think of it as the universal power enabling them to be connected (Merleau-Ponty,1962:243).

For Merleau-Ponty, space is not in-betweenness, like colouring in the gaps to create a background for a picture, it is that which is *felt*. Thus, through our senses we become aware of the way that everything which has a presence is enmeshed or woven together spatially¹.

1. BEING ENTOMBED, BURIED OR TRAPPED IN THE DARK:

1.1 Stepping Inside - Like Being in a Tomb:

When I observed the children standing on the threshold of the museum huddled together, they seemed poised between the light and fresh air outside and a shadowy sense of mystery within. What, I wondered, could they be thinking? However, once they had filed through the narrow doorway and made their way towards the dimly-lit gallery with its 'strange' Egyptian objects, a small number² of them told me they felt as if they were 'in a tomb':

I felt like all of a sudden I was walking in a tomb. I noticed there were lots of statues in there and heads - it was all stark and cold.

It smelt funny - in some place like a tomb that had people in it and stuff.

Yes it was a bit dark and it was really quiet. I thought I was in a tomb because tombs are quiet and they're really dark.

1.12 Feeling the Dark - Being 'Spooked Out':

Within the dark, sombre atmosphere which pervaded the ground floor and funerary room, the children appeared scared, nervous and uncomfortable.

It was sort of gloomy because you don't know what's coming behind you and you don't know what's coming in front of you, like in a tomb, it's just all dark.

I felt stupid in the funeral section because it spooked me out. The mummified hand spooked me out so I made sure I didn't have to go in there again.

At one point there were three of us left in there, and Rahul accidentally sort of brushed next to a plant and Bella turned round; she didn't know what it was and she screamed.

Well, in that room when I first went in there, when no one was in there, I thought it was a bit dead because it was dark and it was like music which is very sad, so I ran back to Mrs. Thomas.

In these small, gloomy rooms confronted by so many strange funerary objects, the children seemed to lose their bearings, so whichever way they turned seemed full of risk. The place felt cold, quiet, mysterious and unfriendly, and in their vulnerability their imagination played tricks. Could there be a ghost of a

mummy around the next corner ready to pounce? Sartre describes what it is like to feel the existence of things even if there is nothing to be seen. He says, 'Existence is not something which allows itself to be thought of from a distance; it has to invade you suddenly, pounce upon you, weigh heavily on your heart like a huge motionless animal - or else there is nothing left at all' (Sartre, 2000:189).

As the children described their dark, spooky spatial experiences, I started to consider what it was 'really like'³ to feel different senses of space, in terms of boundaries, proximity, orientation and familiarity. Heidegger tells us that while spaces need boundaries to be realized, it is only through human use or dwelling that spaces become locations. Whether near or far, dwelling involves human interaction with things (Heidegger,1975:151).

In the museum, the darkness, which prevented the children from gaining a real measure of the space, created an atmosphere of uncertainty, confusion and death. Instead of the spaces being identified as somewhere, the children could have been anywhere even in a tomb. Unable to sense the boundaries they became disoriented not knowing which way to go. Furthermore, despite the fact that the objects were close at hand, their weirdness and unfamiliarity left the children feeling distant, disconnected and 'out of touch'. And, for a very few⁴ children, these conditions engendered an overwhelming urge to flee.

1.13 Being Buried - Being Trapped:

However, it wasn't merely the mystery of the dark which unnerved and disoriented the children; some felt as if they were about to be buried.

When I went in it was a bit dark. The mummy case made me feel shivery and it was like they were going to put it over me.

In the funeral section I felt strange; I thought I was being buried.

I thought they were going to take me and bury me. [Who?] ⁵ The mummies.

When I listened to the wild shrieks which followed this child's statement, I immediately understood just how scary this idea was. What would it really be like to be trapped in a mummy case, buried by sand be unable to get out?

In a paper entitled, 'Lived Space', Bollnow (1960), discusses the notion of

inclined spaces , put forward by Binswanger. He writes:

The notion of the inclined space means by inclination the total state of feeling which goes through a man and at the same time binds him to the surrounding world ... In this sense we may say that lived-space depends on a man's present disposition (Bollnow,1960:38).

Van Manen (1990), concurs and says, 'We know that the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel' (1990:102). These quotations support my observations that lived space is not experienced merely in geometric dimensions, but more significantly, at the level of feeling. In this instance the children's feelings of fear became characteristic of the space. Bollnow continues by quoting Goethe:

'O God, how the world and heaven shrink together when our heart cowers in its barriers'. Fear means literally constriction of the heart, and the outer world draws in oppressive and heavy on the man in fear. When fear departs the world spreads out and opens a larger space for action, in which a man can move freely and easily (Bollnow,1960:38).

Reading these words I am left wondering whether the children's descriptions of being buried are an audible manifestation of the constriction which is fear.

Yeah, it's shocking that someone's head has been in there - imagine being trapped in there and not being able to get out. It's scary.

As I consider this statement, I too begin to feel shivery and spooked out, imagining what it might be like to be bandaged tightly like a mummy, incarcerated in a freezing stone sarcophagus, unable to see, hear or breathe.

The following accounts of 'lived experiences'⁶ describe what it is like to feel panic, fear and desperation when trapped underground. In the first one, Professor Weeks explores some tombs in the Valley of the Kings. He says:

At this point my feet were atop the debris in chamber 3, my stomach fifty centimetres lower, my head was twisted painfully into the tiny space between the fill and the ceiling of the next chamber, sharp stone chips cut my cheek and I was bent nearly backwards in a U shape. [For the first time ever he suffered claustrophobia] Bats, scorpions, snakes and diseases; all part of the excavating Egyptologist's everyday life. But there is something about suffocation, however, which is too close to the subject, too reminiscent of the tomb (Weeks, in Bibby:2000:12).

Feelings of entrapment overwhelm this experienced archæologist as he becomes tightly wedged in this airless space amongst the bats, scorpions and snakes. One can easily identify with the oppressiveness of his fear and physical predicament.

In the next paragraph, Major Myers describes the feelings of panic which one of his guides experienced when they investigated an Egyptian cave in 1886.

Writing in his diary he described:

We crawled along some 200 yards into the hills along an intricate passage. Sometimes having to crawl on our stomachs... during our way in in places the bats were in swarms flying into one's face and hanging on to our clothes and putting out the candle. The smell too was quite overpowering, concentrated essence of bat with a strong smell of ammonia, quite drowning in mummies which is usually predominant in these places ... the floor was strewn feet deep I should say with debris consisting of mummified crocodiles, mummy cloth and human bones and skulls and other bones ... Mohammed, who during our progress into the place had been complaining of want of breath, when we were near the end got infernally frightened and almost crying implored me not to go any further thinking probably he was going to the infernal regions ... (Myers, 1886).

In this instance, it wasn't just the thought of being in a deathly dark domain strewn with ancient corpses, it was the suffocation from the noxious odours of ammonia and rotting flesh which caused fear and anxiety. In the children's case, although they knew they weren't trapped underground, they imagined what the terror of confinement and asphyxiation would feel like.

1.2 FEELING SCARED AND YET EXCITED IN THE DARK:

Even though a great many children expressed a sense of unease in both darkened rooms, there were some who felt a real sense of curiosity. For them, the darkness spelt excitement - for them, almost anything could happen. In the following statements the children describe not merely what it felt like to experience fear, but more significantly, how they were prepared to meet it head on as both a challenge and a potential adventure. They said:

I felt interested and I was a bit scared when we went into that dark room, but I was quite - fairly excited.

When I came in and it was quite dark I thought there might be a little adventure, maybe a secret panel or something.

As I entered the dark, dimly lit room I felt excited yet curious.

As soon as I saw the black walls I knew this trip was going to be mysterious and ancient - it's a good setting for the Egyptians.

Penetrating the darkness involved taking risks; however, the chance of experiencing something thrilling was always possible. Being unaware of what might be discovered heightened the tension and made the wait worthwhile.

If the unfamiliarity of the museum was intensified by the dark, the fact that it

was experienced in contradictory ways seemed to lend an air of reality to the situation. Van Manen (1991), describes the human need to experience both security and risk. He explains:

Children seem often caught in their desire to venture out, court danger, and engage in daring behaviour, while at the same time they seek to free themselves of risk and uncertainty. Even as adults we often seem to be consciously engaged in the struggle between our desire to exercise our freedom by taking risks and our desire to enjoy security by reducing risk (van Manen,1991:57).

Matthew Day (1996), also discusses these contradictory aspects in relation to 'being at home in the postmodern world'. Citing ideas by Freud (1959), and Heidegger (1962), he explains that, while our homes provide shelter and security, they are also places from which we need to distance ourselves in order to thrive. To stay 'at home' permanently therefore is to lead a static, carceral existence; to step outside is to face up to reality and enter into the 'uncanniness' of our being-in-the-world. Certainly, when away from home thoughts of home embody a sense of longing, but there is horror too (Day,1996:9-12).

As the children stepped into that unfamiliar space the darkness magnified the museum's strangeness; and yet, despite an initial feeling of anxiety, the secrecy of the dark, like the mystery of the unfamiliar, seemed to pull them ever inwards and onwards. It was as if what was there to be discovered was an uncanny rediscovery, and as such represented no threat because it was already familiar. This stepping forth on the crest of an anxious wave was what made the experience feel real, or what Heidegger termed, *authentic* ⁷.

1.3 BEING TRANSPORTED TO EGYPT:

1.3.1 Being Transported - Surrounded by Objects:

As a contrast to the scary atmosphere of the ground floor and funerary room, the main gallery on the first floor stopped the children in their tracks. Here, in this vast, brightly-lit space arrayed with objects, the children were thrust into what approximated to the 'atmosphere of ancient Egypt'.

I felt like I was in Egypt because it was like all of them in the cases.

Seeing such a vast display was, as they described, stunning and overwhelming - there were far too many objects to count; and, as the children tried to take them all in, I detected a sense of urgency - would there be enough time to see them

all?

I thought it was very, very kind of full and I thought I was in Egypt as well.

I was amazed at the amount of antiques from ancient Egypt.

I thought we didn't have time to look at it all.

Wherever they looked they could see fantastic jewellery, amazing turquoise ceramics - such a rich assortment of styles; such a wealth of treasure.

Well, I had the experience that I was in Egypt because of all the lovely colours.

The excitement was palpable - just like a wonderful Egyptian bazaar. If only they could touch, after all the objects seemed to call to them craving their attention.

Well, I think they're just fascinating because they've got so many things that we don't have in our country. They have different ways to do things. I find everything just fascinating.

1.3.2 Being Transported - Feeling like Egypt:

For many of the children it was the sight of these unusual objects collected and displayed together which had the effect of transporting them imaginatively to Egypt.

I thought I was actually walking into Egypt when I saw the objects.

It kind of made you feel you were around them ... in Egypt or something.

Within these small galleries the children felt as if they were stepping into a completely different, sensuous world. There were so many lovely colours, such a variety of distinctive shapes, typical of this arcane culture.

It wasn't merely the sight of the objects which transported the children however, it was the ambient conditions such as the temperature and the air which seemed to stimulate their imaginations.

It really gave me the feeling that I was in Egypt because there was a gush of warm air.

It made me feel how hot it was in Egypt.

It was like I was really back in Egypt ... as if the sand blew away.

However, when the children moved up to the top floor and touched the objects, Egypt seemed more vivid. To handle these ancient everyday things which had been crafted, used and treasured all those years ago appeared to bring the

children immediately in touch with the ancient Egyptians.

But here, you can touch the stuff and feel what they felt like and see how they were made.

I felt like I was in ancient Egypt when I felt those amazing Egyptian artefacts ... I really liked investigating them.

Touching the roughness of the cat's death-mask or the smooth wooden headrest, and being aware that they would have been in a tomb or even a pyramid, helped the children experience a more complex, multi-layered embodied sense of Egypt. These objects had not only survived the ravages of time, but they stood as manifestations of that desert land - of sand and soil, papyrus and lotus, and the ever-present water of the River Nile. It was this gathering, together with the heat, humidity and stuffiness of the museum, which gave a more imaginatively Egyptian *feel* to the experience.

While Heidegger's notion of the 'four fold'⁸ seems germane to this experience, his thoughts on how things embody the world, and how we can locate ourselves with and through things as part of this embodiment, are especially pertinent. The form, materials, age, condition, style, purpose and craftsmanship of objects help them to speak; but, while we are attracted towards them by their physical qualities, their meanings will always be personally constructed. For the children, the nearness of Egypt wasn't felt merely because the objects were near (on the other side of the glass or in front of them on the table), but because they were drawn into the constellation of the objects' *thingliness*⁹ which in itself was part and parcel of ancient Egypt.

1.3.3 Being transported - Daydreaming to Egypt:

As the children focused on the objects they were drawn so near they were caught up in things. Merleau-Ponty (1964), explains:

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a:163).

While they felt as if they were under the objects' spell, the children described how, by pressing a button, going to 'a mysterious mind' or stepping inside an Egyptian house they were physically/imaginatively taken to Egypt.

It made me sort of feel I pressed a button and then I appeared in Egypt ...

When you see really old things it makes you go to a mysterious mind - dreams, daydreams inside your head.

When I saw it I felt as if I had gone into a (...) an Egyptian house and they had all the (...) kind of, I think I remember they had a goblet and I thought I was eating ancient Egyptian stuff at a dinner table, really inside an Egyptian house.

For other children they just seemed to be in Egypt without any sense of travelling or arriving.

When I walked into that room I felt like I had, just for a second, I felt like I had just been in a place where the Queen's treasures were taken to the pyramids. I felt like I was in a room full of treasure you know, different kinds of things. I was sure I was in a treasury.

Yet again, whilst overcome by the sight of the objects, some children related not only what was happening in their dream space, but how long they were there.

I almost felt like I was watching a ceremony taking place for a second and then I was back. I can't really describe it.

The children felt there, in Egypt. It wasn't an idle fancy, it was a genuinely palpable experience which didn't need explaining or substantiating because to them it felt so real.

It looks like the Nile is there and you are just standing in the world now, and the Nile is just in front of you ... it's ... it's like ... it's just like a person standing there right now.

For some children, their daydreams included not merely being moved to this ancient place, but an exact description of how they were using the objects. As Heidegger(1975), says, 'dwelling is always a staying with things' (Heidegger,1975:151). As one reads these descriptions one can also feel imaginatively moved to Egypt, picturing the children dwelling with the objects.

I was like a farmer or villager or someone like that, and I was making these for the pharaoh or the high priests.

LIVED BODY

As I began to consider the ways in which the children expressed themselves bodily, I found it helpful to draw on some phenomenological texts. First, Merleau-Ponty (1962), explains how perception of the world and our place within it is fundamentally dependent on our body; he writes, 'I delve into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience ... the thing, and the world, are

given to me along with the parts of my body ... Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body'(Merleau-Ponty,1962:204-206). Second, because we exist in the world through our bodies, our experience of other people and their experience of us can only happen in a bodily way¹⁰. However, this experience is always partial because, though we reveal some aspects of ourselves, we conceal others (van Manen,1990:103).

Bearing these ideas in mind, I paid attention to the ways in which the children revealed and concealed themselves through gestures, silence, words and speech, in my attempt to move towards an understanding of their experiences with the objects. I then discovered that, even though every facet of their experience had bodily manifestations, there were three common themes which were particularly redolent of the corporeal dimension. While two of these themes were complex, covering what it felt like to be stunned, and face death, the third described what it was like to be both frightened *and* excited to experience funerary and mummified exhibits. However, before I take a closer look at these themes I want to consider how gesture and speech can complement each other. Merleau-Ponty(1962), asserts:

Speech and gesture transfigure the body ... in order to express it the body must in the final analysis become the thought or intention that it signifies for us. It is the body which points out and speaks ... (Merleau-Ponty,1962: 197).

How can this be? Throughout life, according to Merleau-Ponty, our existence in the world is synonymous with our bodily perceptual experiences. However, we only become aware of *being* at the dawn of consciousness and reflection. For example: a new-born baby lying in its cot awakes from sleep and immediately feels its surroundings through its senses - the warmth and the smell of the nursery, the noise and vibration of movement in the next room, the softness of its blankets and the blurred sight of a mobile suspended from the ceiling. It also begins to feel hungry and wet. As its pangs of hunger and discomfort increase it moves around, kicks off its blankets and starts to cry, grimacing and contorting its facial muscles: all these gestures and sounds happen instinctively. In this situation there are feelings which encompass discomfort and there are signs which transcend the feelings. The baby has no words to express itself, it does it entirely through gesture and raw sound. It does not think, 'I'm hungry, I'm

wet, I want some company', because it doesn't have words. It does however, *feel*; it *feels* insecure and a visceral sense of discomfort which causes it to wriggle, frown, kick, and cry¹¹.

How is it possible for the significance of these instinctive gestures to be interpreted? Again Merleau-Ponty (1962), suggests: we can only begin to understand ourselves and others through the body, as a consequence of being attuned to the way we, as human beings, interact with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:186). Therefore, as I watched the children discover the objects, their bodily gestures contributed to my understanding of how they were feeling.

When they revealed their feelings in speech on the other hand, I was able to understand through audible interpretation. This is what Gadamer refers to as the 'fusion of horizons'¹², which means that as I listened and understood what the children had to say my interpretation consisted of an amalgam of both our points of view. The character of this fusion was therefore different from both individual perspectives (Gadamer, 1975:271-273).

Taking both the children's gestures and their statements, embedded within the 'circle of the unexpressed'¹³, I began to piece together what it felt like to feel stunned/amazed, to face death, and to feel frightened and excited by the objects.

2. BEING STUNNED - AMAZED:

When the children experienced the objects practically every one of them showed signs of being stunned/amazed; and, as I considered this I discovered that it manifested itself in four different ways, namely: by being incapacitated, surprised, confounded or horrified. In the first category, the children showed signs of either stopping in their tracks, becoming breathless, speechless, or being gripped and fascinated.

2.1.1 BEING STUNNED - AMAZED - INCAPACITATED:

Incapacitated - Stopped in One's Tracks:

As the children approached the objects for the first time I often noticed them stop in their tracks quite suddenly. When we feel stunned/amazed sometimes we look away and then look again finding it hard to 'take in' what we see; we might

even say, 'I had to do a double take', as if we had to re-run the experience to check our eyes weren't deceiving us. This stopping made me aware that the children needed a moment of pause to come to terms with their amazement, and their statements confirmed this too. For example, they said:

Leading up to them it made you stop straight away.

When I came round the corner and saw all the masks I was just really stunned. I didn't really think they'd be there. I thought I was seeing things.

When we got to the middle floor I was stunned; at least two hundred artefacts were in front of me.

2.1.2 Incapacitated - Feeling Breathless:

Often, in those initial moments when the children caught their first glimpse of the objects, they were so awestruck they instinctively gasped. This sudden intake of breath, sounding like a soft 'ah', *held* them entranced - literally suspended between breaths. Attempting to describe how they felt they said:

I can't even explain it I'm out of breath.

I held the little shabti figure ... it was still amazing that you were very nearly touching it ... so it was breath-taking really.

2.1.3 Being Incapacitated - Speechlessness:

While many of the children's gestures and statements revealed how stunned/amazed they were, there were some whose response to the objects robbed them of speech. Watching these children stare, often with their mouths wide open, it seemed as if words failed them. As one child said:

When I stepped in I was speechless.

For other children however, speechlessness was experienced more as a sense of difficulty in putting their feelings into words, as the following statements describe:

They made me feel a feeling I've never felt before. I can't really describe it.

I can't explain - you just feel it inside you - I can't explain.

You can't really tell what you're feeling.

These three statements show how words escaped the children: they either couldn't describe the experience; couldn't explain it; or couldn't really tell. This wasn't a matter of choice however, as if they wanted to keep the experience secret, rather, they had a genuine verbal problem. In a paper entitled, *Beyond*

words: on the *Experience of the Ineffable*, Dienske(1985), describes various ways in which speechlessness may present itself. For example, because we are always *submerged* in our body, it is often difficult to distance ourselves from it to know what we have experienced. In addition, some experiences involve a complex web of emotions which are problematic by being difficult to disentangle or distinguish and thereby describe (Dienske,1985:2,3). The children also told me how experiencing something for the very first time was often confusing; so much so, it was not always possible to identify and express what they had experienced. One child said:

When I was touching the objects it was quite scary because I didn't want to break them - I was all muddled up - I don't know how to explain it really.

But, merely because we cannot attach a label to the emotions we feel, does not mean that they don't exist. As the children's attention was drawn to their speechlessness they became aware that what they had experienced was something ineffable - something which was beyond the limits of their rationality, in a space where there was a total intimacy between themselves and the world (Dienske,1985: 6,10).

2.1.4 Incapacitated - Being Held Captive:

If many of the children were stunned into silence when they spotted the objects, a great many were gripped or fascinated by them. For instance, I not only noticed them draw right up to the display cases and press their noses against the glass, but they told me:

It made you look really closely at them.

Then I looked a little bit closer and I saw how much detail was put into it. I felt I just wanted to get in there and try to feel it.

They also appeared enraptured, riveted to the spot wanting to know more. They explained:

I felt really fascinated because I was holding something which was three thousand years old.

When you pick things up and look closely you find out quite a lot about ancient Egypt.

Just wonder and curiosity.

In these ways it was clear to me how the children were entranced by the objects, as if they were under their spell. Levin describes what this is like. He

says:

To behold is to be *held* by what one sees. To behold is, in this sense, to be also *beheld*. Conversely, since the beheld is that which *holds* our gaze - holds it, sometimes, and binds it under a spell, it is also true to say that the beheld is also the one beholding (Levin,1988:257).

Levin suggests that our gaze engages us in a symbiotic sense of capture. This is not in the sense of being ensnared or trapped however, but in a more gentle way by being intrigued - led onwards by the mystery.

When the children had the opportunity of actually touching the objects I noticed a similar sense of beholdenness¹⁴. On those occasions it wasn't merely that the objects were unfamiliar which seemed to hold them spell-bound, it was being *allowed* to hold Egyptian antiquity which was so stunning. In the holding, in the nearness of this contact, there seemed to be the stirrings of a tactile relationship which prompted interest and questioning¹⁵ under the banner of care¹⁶. For example, the children said:

How did you unwrap the mummified hand?

Why did they like the colour blue?

My favourite part was feeling the lid of a canopic jar. I wonder if a part of the Pharaoh's body was in the jar with this lid on.

2.1.2.1 BEING STUNNED - AMAZED - BEING SURPRISED:

The children's stunned surprise as they viewed and touched the objects raises some interesting issues about the way the senses inform perception. While I have already discussed some aspects of space in the section above, I want to comment on the fundamental ways in which the distance senses (sight, hearing) and proximity senses (touch, taste) function. In 'Some Aspects of Touch', Buytendijk (1970), begins by highlighting how crucial space is in determining the way in which these senses direct our attention to the world. Thus, while sight enables us to be projected beyond ourselves, touch gives us the experience of knowing our own body limits - of being *ourself* and being *together*; in other words, becoming aware of our *own* body as well as *foreign* bodies. This process begins actively by groping, grasping and restless searching, often in a spirit of anticipation, and develops passively and reflectively as the unfamiliar becomes known (Buytendijk,1970:99 -105,123).

When discussing *The Thing*, Heidegger (1975), questions notions of nearness and presence, claiming that distance means nothing unless related to things; and nearness and remoteness have more to do with engaging with the presence of things rather than considering distances. He explains, 'If we think of the thing as thing then we spare and protect the thing's presence in the region from which it presences ... As we preserve the thing *qua* thing we inhabit nearness' (1975:165,181).

Our senses and our intellect (including our memory and imagination) inform our relationships with objects, and in the process determine not only how we *feel ourselves* within our historical and cultural understanding, but how we *feel the world*. Being surprised by the objects brought them into nearness.

2.1.2.2 Being Surprised - 'WOW':

Every child who felt stunned by the objects showed a bodily response which indicated a coming to terms with the unfamiliar as an unexpected experience. And, as both the statements below reveal, some children spontaneously uttered the word 'wow' to draw attention to the remarkable nature of this encounter. Moreover, the way in which it exploded from their lips puncturing the air, mirrored their surprise.

And then we touched them and it was like, wow!

I felt amazed, I thought wow, I've never seen these things before.

Seeing and holding, feeling structure, form and texture brought the children into close contact with the objects, allowing them to explore their ideas by addressing the unforeseen.

2.1.2.3 Being Surprised - Eye-Opening:

As other children experienced the objects for the first time I could see quite clearly how their wide-eyed expressions conveyed astonishment and surprise. Listening to their embodied language also revealed how at almost every turn there was something new and unexpected:

I felt surprised to see writing on the stone and the death masks.

I thought it was really eye-opening.

Having the opportunity to actually handle ancient objects was far more than

one child could have imagined - he was stunned - it was a 'big blow'. This was not in the sense of being an unpleasant shock, but something quite out of the blue.

I didn't expect to handle some actual ancient Egyptian objects - it was a big blow ... I just expected to look around and see things.

I also became aware when a number of children stared and stared at the unfamiliar mummy masks that they found them confusing:

They made me feel a bit scared because I didn't know who they were: I hadn't been there before, like ... I felt really confused.

2.1.3.1 BEING STUNNED - AMAZED - BEING CONFOUNDED:

When the majority of the children¹⁷ told me how stunned/amazed they felt it was in terms of disbelief. For example, they said:

It's like I'm dreaming. So, I rub my eyes to wake myself up because I think I'm in a dream, but I'm already awake and in my school uniform - I just can't believe it, I really can't.

When I saw the real Egyptian things I just couldn't believe my eyes.

In the funeral section I felt sort of dizzy because there were lots of things all over the place.

In all these cases the children seemed to wrestle with the reality of the situation. Here they were, face to face with objects which they had only ever experienced at second hand: in books, on a video, CD Rom, film or maybe in their dreams. To see so many all at once seemed to make them feel unsteady and make their heads spin. It also urged them to rub their eyes to check whether they were 'seeing things'. Being drawn into the objects' constellations through sheer surprise made their presence so near it was hard to believe.

2.1.3.2 Being Confounded - Feeling Funny/Weird/Strange:

However, if feeling stunned/amazed confounded the children - making them doubt the reliability of their senses, it also made them feel unlike themselves. In other words, feeling funny, weird and strange:

They made me feel quite funny ... sort of strange. It makes you feel weird because you've never touched an object from Egypt before.

It was really weird actually ... it's kind of hard to explain how you feel. I found myself sweaty when I looked at them and this made me feel strange.

As I listened and watched the children describe how they felt, I sensed a real tension: seeing and touching these unfamiliar objects was visibly disorienting.

Feeling funny, weird or strange felt uncomfortably unfamiliar. They not only failed to recognise the objects, but failed to recognise themselves. When we fail to identify an object or a person, we too can feel 'thrown' or put 'off guard'; we can feel distanced, disconnected and unlike ourselves - in another word, *strange*.

2.1.3.3 Being Confounded - Feeling Shocked and Confused:

I also noticed that when the children experienced different-sized objects there was a similar sense of confusion. As they encountered extremely large or small objects their own sense of bodily scale was affected. For example:

It made me feel a little shocked because something so big can be bigger than you - the little children - it can be quite shocking for them; it can be shocking for us as well.

The big decorated coffin was nice. I liked the patterns inside it - it made me feel short.

I felt, I felt you know upstairs where there were lots of small things. I felt I was in a giant's maze.

To be brought down to size, or alternatively built up in size, felt bewildering. On the one hand, as the children peered up at the enormous mummy case they felt defenceless and small; and on the other, they felt colossal and clumsy when they peered down at the minutest amulet or the tiniest doll. Experiencing these extremes can be compared with feeling like a balloon - inflated one minute and deflated the next.

2.1.4.1 BEING STUNNED - AMAZED - BEING HORRIFIED:

Feeling Cold, Shivery, Tingly:

Although the children felt stunned/amazed in a variety of ways, some of them became horrified when they first encountered the objects. However, instead of feeling hot and sweaty, or large or small, they experienced contrasting physical symptoms redolent of tension and fear. Almost as if they had entered a polar region they began to shiver, shake, tingle and feel really cold. And again, before they knew it, before they could articulate the experience, their bodies registered their anxiety¹⁸.

I've never seen an ancient object before so I felt really cold.

My hand was shivering and my picture was really wobbly. Seeing the objects

made me feel all shaky.

You kind of got tingles down your spine to see it. I don't know but it was really strange.

Encountering a strange object unexpectedly can put us off balance, it can make us shiver and shake. For the child who was sketching, this uncontrollable movement made her picture resemble a scribble. When we shiver with fright it feels as though our blood has run cold - we literally fear death. The following quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, seems to sum up this sense of horrified shock.

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres
(Shakespeare, in Knowles, 1999:662).

2.2 FACING DEATH:

Although some of the objects in the exhibition had no association with Egyptian burial practices, a vast majority had funerary resonances. Within this broad category there were ancient mummified animals, a human hand, amulets, shabtis, death masks, a mummy case and canopic jars. As a general rule, all the mummies and objects which had been in close contact with a dead body, were experienced by the children in a more dramatic/emotive way.

2.2.1. Facing Death - Feeling Sick and Disgusted:

When the children encountered these exhibits they not only described feeling sick and ill but their faces showed signs of disgust and revulsion.

And I saw a dead hand - a sort of black hand. It made me feel sick.

It freaked me out but it made me feel ill because seeing a mummified cat and falcon and hand and things like that, it was really scary so it made me feel ill.

These objects didn't just look distasteful but they summoned up images of death. Were these shrivelled, bandaged and decaying specimens what death looked like? The notion of being black and dismembered like the hand was too awful to contemplate. Could it happen to them?

Everyone was nearly fainting - it was strange and disgusting... it was someone's hand.

When I saw the mummified hand it made me feel very uncomfortable - it had shrunk and it was all black as well.

The black, mummified hand had actually belonged to someone; despite being an exhibit, it had been alive, blood had flowed through its veins, and the bones and tendons which had once enabled the hand to move were still visible. Seeing this static, lifeless exhibit was not just distasteful it was distressing to at least half the children.

According to James Elkins (1996), because we have a propensity to look for bodily forms when we look at images, we automatically bring body parts to wholeness in our mind's eye if we perceive only a partial bodily shape. However, when we see bodies it is crucial for them to move to prove they are alive, otherwise we find them disturbing (Elkins,1996:124,128,132-135).

According to Sartre (1943), anguish, absurdity and nausea are the three main emotions we exhibit when we become aware that we are alive. However, while anguish and absurdity are associated with thoughts of human freedom and dispensability, nausea is the feeling which arises out of the fundamental realization that consciousness is a bodily phenomenon. In his novel, *Nausea*, Sartre(2000), describes what this is like:

I feel like vomiting - and all of a sudden, there it is: like Nausea... So this is Nausea: this blinding revelation? ... Now I know: I exist - the world exists - and I know that the word exists. That's all ... Things have broken free of their names. They are there, grotesque, stubborn, gigantic, and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them: I am in the midst of Things which cannot be given names. Alone, wordless, defenceless, they surround me, under me, behind me, above me. They demand nothing they don't impose themselves, they are there (Sartre,1965:176,180).

Sartre's nausea overwhelms him - he feels a real fear of being alone, wordless and defenceless amongst the viscosity or stickiness of things (both objects and ideas). As the children encountered these dead exhibits, their bodily symptoms acted as signals which might suggest that they did not want to face death, or contemplate thoughts of death.

2.2.2 Facing Death - Feeling Afraid:

While some children were disgusted and couldn't cope with the sight and feel of the objects, others felt differently. For example:

Then I went into the second part; I came to find myself staring at a mummified kitten, falcon and human hand. Then a shiver ran down my back.

It really scared me.

The mummified things made me shiver ... I felt like ugh; it was like that.

The mummified hand really made me feel ... creepy.

I felt really freaked out when I saw the mummified hand - it was rather spooky.

I felt scary, very cold.

Having learnt that a still, lifeless body can be a frightening experience, Elkins (1996), also explains that body parts - especially those normally hidden from view, can be even more terrifying as they announce death:

But I mean ... the intestines and things like that; you think, ugh! I'm sticking my hands in here - I mean I'm feeling and you think to yourself well, I don't want to.

I deliberately avoided them because I don't like gruesome stuff.

When the children witnessed the visible evidence of mummification, and realized that they were touching an object which had stored human remains, they became pale as if the blood had drained from their faces. This close personal contact instinctively made them recoil and shrink from the sight. Again, Elkins comments about death: he says, 'Those moments are terrifying, and we normally do not want to see them. Like most people, I usually try to think *around* death' (Elkins,1996:107).

In Heidegger's (1973), work *Being and Time*, the notion of *being* as time is a central concern. Moreover, *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world, as a temporal phenomenon not only unfolds throughout life but is ultimately finite. Therefore, because death is inevitable, there is always a state of anxiety with regard to *Dasein*. *Dasein* dreads death because it ushers in its non-existence. *Dasein* can be said to be thus, "being-toward-death'. Explaining a further facet of Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, Ross (1997), says:

At any given moment, one may live authentically, as a Being-toward-death, or one may attempt, inauthentically, to 'flee in the face of death'. It is important to note that there are no 'authentic individuals' because authenticity must be constantly renewed ... Authentic modes of being anticipate death and maintain it as a possibility ... In this way, death is made conspicuous and personal, and in order to gain a freedom toward death, 'Dasein must have courage in the face of such dread'. Only if this is undertaken will the person be able to attain a wholeness in his or her potentiality for Being (Ross, in Pollio, Henley and Thompson,1997:312).

This understanding of death would seem to resonate with the children's encounters with ancient mummified and funerary exhibits; perhaps their anxiety or dread was characteristic of an 'authentic' being-toward-death. One child explains it like this:

It's not really fear, it's ... well, it's like a feeling you have to overcome. It's just not to think, I'm not touching this, it's gross, you've got to take chances.

For adults coming face to face with death can be a defining moment - it can help us to reposition ourselves in terms of our own potentiality as human beings. However, while the sight of death can be dreadful, addressing it can make reality and existence that much more palpable. The children could not explain this in words, but their bodily gestures of squirming, wanting to flee, feeling tingly, shaky and creepy all announced that reality which speaks of human mortality¹⁹.

FEELING FRIGHTENED AND YET EXCITED:

2.3 Feeling Shivery and Tingly - Excited:

Although the vast majority of children experienced disgust and fear when they encountered the mummified and funerary exhibits, there were some who found them quite thrilling. They said:

The mummified hand was really cool and so were the mummified falcon and kitten.

I really liked the mummified animals and the hand. It made me shiver when I saw them.

What I enjoyed about the exhibition was touching the object because it made me shiver.

In Chapter 5, I quoted Martin Levin's fascination for the miasmal creepiness of ancient Egyptian sites and artefacts, and how they held a sense of excitement for him. He, like the children above, seemed attracted by what could be regarded as the macabre. How is it possible to be excited about seeing and touching funerary exhibits, or *loving miasmal creepiness*? Is it as a way of toying with thoughts of death, or, as Heidegger would say, attempting to make an 'authentic' approach to life? Elkins (1996), comments on this phenomenon by referring to a theory of Bataille. He says:

Aspects of death are terrifying, and so I do not see them, in the sense that I avoid thinking about them. It is frightening how death becomes more and more obvious as we get older, until people who are dying can be unbearable

to see, because they are deeply immersed in death - death hovers over them and waits, as they used to say (Bataille, in Elkins,1996:107).

Though it is not certain that children experience death in the same way as adults, from the children's statements above the objects were clearly compelling - they found them *cool*, or in other words, both distinctive and impressive²⁰. Moreover, they were so moved by their *coolness* they began to shiver in response. It could be argued that both the great age of the objects, and the fact that they could touch them, contributed to the singularity of the experience, rather than thoughts of death.

LIVED TIME

As I reflected on the children's behaviour and their written and verbal statements, I became aware that notions of time, age, and ancientness were significant issues. Accordingly, in the process of describing their experiences with the objects, the children told me what it felt like to be moved back in time, to feel old or ancient - like an ancient Egyptian, as well as feel the quality of *ancientness*.

However, before I begin to focus on these themes specifically, I want to refer to some phenomenological, museological and archaeological texts which are helpful in explaining not only how fundamental time is to human being in the world, but also show what part objects can play in this process. I hope in this way to come closer to the experience and describe it with more insight.

Two papers by Briod(1986), and Burton(1991), which discuss young children's experiences of time, reveal that a child's understanding of time from the outset is living in the moment by experiencing thoroughly. As long as children are immersed in fluid time where one activity flows into another, time is 'now' - what is happening at this moment - thinking in and with time not about time itself. During their museum visit the children became absorbed in sketching, treasure hunting and handling - and were constantly having to focus and refocus until their departure. Time for them was essentially being involved with the objects. However, this involvement elicited a host of different gestures and embodied feelings which were often expressed, though sometimes could not

be expressed. These embodied feelings, named or unnamed, were part and parcel of being. So, for example, the children said:

It was interesting and fun. When I touched the objects I felt excited.

I also liked the treasure hunt - it was great fun. I found my thing straight away. It has a nice blue flower cup.

But they also said:

On the first floor the time was interesting; I drew a mask. It was hard to draw the damaged bits though.

And you got tingles down your spine to see it. I don't know but it was really strange.

There are three points I want to make here. First, that *being* means existing in time - the children were actively engaged which was mostly great fun but at times was quite scary. Second, being means existing with things - they were interested in finding out about the objects; and third, being means existing in the world, spatially, bodily, temporally and relationally.

I have already mentioned Heidegger's text, *Being and Time*, (1973), in which he attempts to understand what it is to be - to exist - claiming that this ontological inquiry should preface all other philosophical projects. *Dasein* - literally translated as *there being* or being-in-the-world, is fundamental to everyday human life. However, in the process of probing the phenomenon of being, Heidegger establishes that:

We shall point to *temporality* as the meaning of the Being of that entity which we call 'Dasein'... Time must be brought to light - and genuinely conceived - as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it... But temporality is also the condition which makes historicity possible as a temporal kind of Being which Dasein itself possesses, regardless of whether or how Dasein is an entity 'in time'... Dasein 'is' its past in the way of *its* own Being, which to put it roughly, 'historizes' out of its future on each occasion (Heidegger, 1973:38,39,41).

Implicit to the notion of existence then is the notion of time. And, furthermore, implicit to this existence is the notion of history; from the very moment of life Being gathers a presence, then later as the child grows it gathers a reflected and remembered presence and therefore a past.

For Merleau-Ponty (1962), to be conscious and aware of ourselves and the world is an aspect of time. He suggests, 'I am myself time ... To be conscious is nothing but 'to be at', because my consciousness of existing merges into the actual

gesture of existence. Consciousness is the very act of temporalization - Time and significance are but one thing ... We are the upsurge of time' (1962:421-428). This *significance* is crucial however, because it helps to determine not only a sense of Self, but concomitantly a sense of the 'other'. The process of positioning ourselves vis à vis other things, whether animate or inanimate, is a temporal phenomenon which results in the formation of relationships. Again, Merleau-Ponty (1962), contends:

I do not so much perceive objects as reckon with an environment ... time is, therefore, not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things. Within things themselves, the future and the past are in a kind of eternal state of preexistence and survival ... what is past or future for me is present in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:416, 412).

There is often confusion and mystery surrounding 'time' which seems to originate in the disjunction between time lived through - which is on-going and felt bodily, and time thought or reflected upon. Every moment in time therefore, which is a *dihescence* or a bursting forth, not only happens with every breath, but also at the moment when awareness occurs as thought, which may be about time passed, time passing or time to come.

MOVING BACK IN TIME:

3.1 Time Changes:

The passing of time whereby the future moves to the past as the present is a complicated phenomenon to grasp conceptually. Sartre (2000), also found it difficult. He writes:

This, I think, is what happens: all of a sudden you feel that time is passing, that each moment leads to another moment, this one to yet another and so on; that each moment destroys itself and that it's no use trying to hold back, etc., etc., and then you attribute this property to the events which appear to you *in* the moments; you extend to the contents what appertains to the form. In point of fact, people talk a lot about this famous passing of time, but you scarcely see it (Sartre, 2000:85).

According to recent research, children come to terms with notions of time periods, time changing, continuity and time limits quite naturally through their daily experiences, and gradually incorporate them into their vocabularies. For instance, a child of eighteen months will use the word 'now'; a two year old, 'sometime'; a two and a half year old, 'tomorrow' and a three year old, 'yesterday'. However, it is not until five, seven and eight years old respectively

that time spans of days, months and years can be understood. In addition, dealing with future time like, 'how long will it be?' can be used by the age of seven, while retrospective time estimates like, 'how long have we been talking?' only comes by the age of twelve (Dapkus Chapman, in Pollio, Henley and Thompson, 1997:96-97).

However, when the children came to the museum they described their experience of being with ancient objects as being taken back in time. They said:

It was just like going through the present day back to the time of Egypt.

Well, when I was holding the objects someone could have been holding them in exactly the same way as me, so it felt like I was there when they were holding them ... back in time.

It was like stepping into Egyptian time and you're in like a tomb and you're looking around.

And it was amazing feeling those objects - it felt like you were in Egyptian times.

I liked to touch the statue. When I touched it it felt like olden times.

All these statements seem to indicate that the children felt moved to the remote past - to a time which clearly could *not* have been ancient Egypt, and yet *felt* like an imagined ancient Egypt. Referring to theories by Hodder (1986), Shanks and Tilley (1989), the archaeologist, Thomas (1996), says, 'an object never signifies in and of itself, but through a web of relations with other things which makes up a context, a signifying field, the material equivalent of a language ... The interpretations of material culture we create belong to the present rather than the past and must be seen as partial and situated' (Thomas, 1996:60). Pearce (1994), concurs, 'The emotional potency which undoubtedly resides in many supposedly 'dead' objects in our collections gives a framework for understanding better how our relationships with the material culture of the past operates, and shows that this is part of the way in which we construct our ever-passing present' (Pearce, 1994:135). The sight, the smell and the touch of the ancient Egyptian objects experienced singly and in profusion worked on the children bodily and emotionally. They were literally moved or transported to a time which was redolent of ancientness. Merleau-Ponty (1962), says that, even though we might summon up a remote past, we do so as part of our present situation - there can be no gap therefore between what we think of as remote

and now (Merleau-Ponty,1962:416). For the children, however, it seemed as if they had entered a different time zone; moreover, they even explained how they had to physically turn around to step into it by moving themselves backwards in time. Although it was imaginary it didn't feel imaginary, it *felt* real, phenomenologically speaking²¹.

FEELING TIME:

3.2 Feeling Old or Ancient:

Another temporal aspect of the children's experience was the way in which they related to the past in terms of age and aging. Briod(1986), tells us that young children often find it easier to deal with the remote past which is mythic and beyond human memory, rather than the historical past which requires a memory to be meaningful. As a way of coming to terms with ancient objects the children said they felt old or ancient. For example:

I felt ancient, because they were so old and because I've never touched one before; so I felt ancient for some reason.

When I went in there, I felt like I was just like something like four thousand years old.

I really enjoyed touching the objects. When I touched them I felt so old like I was from ancient Egypt.

When I held the artefact I felt like an ancient Egyptian myself.

Listening to these statements it was clear that the sight and touch of the objects seemed to communicate not just an objective or conceptual sense of great age, but a subjective and embodied *feel* of age. For one child this felt like *being* an ancient Egyptian²². Gadamer(1975), quoted above, explains that understanding involves 'looking beyond what is close at hand ... in order to see it better within a larger whole and in true proportion'(Gadamer,1975:271-273). Pearce (1994), makes a similar observation in relation to museum artefacts:

The meaning of an object lies not wholly in the piece itself, nor wholly in its realization, but somewhere between the two. The object only takes on life or significance when the viewer carries out his realization, and this is dependent partly upon his disposition and experience, and partly upon the content of the objects which works on him. It is this interplay which creates meaning (Pearce,1994:135).

While I concur with Pearce (1994), I want to emphasize that it is not just the creation of meaning which is important, but the character of this meaning. When the children said they felt ancient this was in response to an awareness

of a change in themselves - a change in the way they *felt*. I have already discussed how the children described feeling strange or weird or unlike *themselves*; being alongside ancient objects provided the catalyst for feeling different, or in their words - ancient. Noticing that the objects were ancient was one thing, feeling old or ancient oneself was another, but *feeling* ancientness was a completely different phenomenon.

3.3 BEING MOVED BY ANCIENTNESS:

The children said:

The mummified hand was a bit black and looked as if it had shrunk but it was perfectly preserved and every detail was there. To think that hand had lasted thousands of years was creepy.

I think it was because it's ancient. If it was just new and modern I wouldn't feel all shaky because I could see them in Egypt now, but I can't because they're ancient.

It felt like I'd been touching something millions, well no not millions, but really really old - just weird.

I felt hot and amazed that something that old had survived that long.

It's spooky because it's like thousands and thousands of years ago.

It is interesting to question whether the children's creepy, shaky, weird, hot and spooky feelings were embodiments of their fear of death when they encountered the objects at close quarters? Or, were they 'authentic' responses as Heidegger (1973), might describe them, associated with a fear of the nearness or the inevitability of death? Or, did this sense of ancientness feel like death itself? And, if so, did the children's fear relate to their own deaths, other people's deaths or just to the concept of death?

Unlike the enduring age of these ancient objects, the average span of human life is short. How, therefore, was it possible for them to last so long? Paraphrasing Sartre's attitude to objects in his novel, *Nausea* (1938/2000), Warnock (1970), reveals:

Human beings are naturally prone to want material objects to be completely predictable and completely under their control. The horror and the nausea engendered by the viscous is the fact caused, not only by the tactile quality itself, but still more by the threat contained in such substances as pitch and treacle, that they may flow everywhere and overwhelm one; that if one is caught by them, one will never be able to escape, but will be sucked down like the wasp in the jam-jar. The opposite of their treacle-like creeping stuff is neatly labelled types of things, each governed by an established set of laws, each separated by a tidy definition from every other type (Sartre, in

According to Sartre (1938/2000), it is 'natural'²³ for human beings to want to categorize things as a way of feeling in control of material objects²⁴. Moreover, if certain objects do not conform to this system we feel threatened, and worry about the unpredictability of this non-conformity. When the children experienced the ancient objects for the first time, their longevity was not only perplexing but somewhat sinister - it defied comprehension, it was beyond their powers of understanding and therefore beyond their control.

LIVED HUMAN RELATIONS

Throughout the previous three sections I have discussed how the children's experience of ancient Egyptian objects in the museum revealed fundamental aspects of human being conceived in existential terms. In this section however, I want to explore the ways in which the objects became more personally significant for the children; either by taking on a human quality themselves; by drawing them closer to the ancient Egyptians, or by focusing on them as catalysts for responsible and appreciative behaviour.

I have already explained how time and space are essential to human being. Awareness however, comes with feeling ourselves bodily - both introceptively (inside the body), and extroceptively (outside the body)²⁵. It is through this complex bodily process that the child begins to perceive what it is and what it is not. Both the former and latter comprise the world. That which is not the child is therefore the other. This category of the other is vast however, and comprises both animate and inanimate phenomena - indeed, anything which is a context. For the purposes of this particular study, I am interested to know how a child comes to perceive the 'other' in the world - that is, things (specifically ancient Egyptian objects) and people, and how the child relates to both.

Drawing on research by child psychologists²⁶, Merleau-Ponty(1964), describes in great detail how a child progresses through various stages of worldly contextualization. He explains that while the perception of one's own body comes before the perception of the other, the two processes comprise a system which develops in a fragmentary way²⁷. For example, a child up to the age of

three months will be aware of itself introceptively, but will have no sense of the other, except by being aware of a sense of incompleteness extroceptively when the other is absent(1964:121-5).

While the process of gaining perceptual awareness develops (that is perception of oneself vis à vis perception of the world), by six months a syncretic sense of 'me and other' occurs when the child captures a vision of itself in a mirror²⁸. Initially matching up the mirror image with the specular image - that is to say, *an image with my image* constitutes a real understanding of *Self*. The child is at one and the same moment him/herself and not someone else - the Other (Merleau-Ponty,1964:125-127). In addition, a split occurs for the child because the introceptive *me* is not the specular/imaginary *me*. This can be confusing because there is a difference between me as I *feel* myself, and me as I see myself or as others see me. The specular image then, impinges upon how the child understands and relates to being in the world with others. In consequence, seeing has a complex significance for the child and for other modes of sensibility - seeing is not just a sense of spectacle and the imaginary, but seeing positions the child in relation to others and to the world(Merleau-Ponty,1964:137).

4. THREATENED BY THE 'REAL THING'²⁹:

4.1.1 Objects Coming Alive:

As a child positions itself vis à vis things and people a whole host of implications follow. One implication is *being with* and this concerned the children in the museum. They became astonished by seeing the objects for 'real'; moreover, they seemed so real they almost seemed alive. They said:

I was like - when I went to touch the feet I was like - I can't touch it; I can't touch it. And when I touched it I thought - this is real, but I can't touch it. It was really unreal - like a dream.

The real eyes from the mummy mask made me shiver.

It was sort of just seeing ancient things for the first time in my life for real, it was just a great experience for me.

O my God it can't be real touching something three to four thousand years old.

It was like they were alive - they kept on staring at you, and when you touched the box you could feel them vibrating, just vibrating - they were actually real. It was just wonderful.

The mummy heads felt they were going to jump out and cut my head off.

I saw their heads - I thought they were going to come alive and break through the glass.

Spooky, spooky! I thought it was going to come alive.

I have already explained how the children had had an insight into the exhibition through their school history lessons and an outreach session. In consequence, when they visited the museum they had begun to anticipate what it might be like to experience the objects 'in the flesh' as it were rather than through book illustrations, slides or CD Roms. However, imagining what something might be like can often be completely different from actually experiencing it. So much so, when the majority of the children stepped into the museum they couldn't contain their amazement; one child even claimed she could feel them vibrating.

The existence of these inanimate things would normally have allowed the children to remain in control. But, with the exhibits which were both whole or partial bodies their reactions were different. From Elkins (1996), above, we learnt that for bodies to be perceived it is necessary for them to move. Here all the objects were motionless: they were life-like yes, but they had a deathly stillness about them which the children felt disquieting and even threatening. Moreover, many of these objects took on a sinister, anthropomorphic and unpredictable quality; thus to feel they might come out of the glass, jump on them or chop their heads off, made them shiver and feel spooked out. Here again there is a possible resonance with Sartre's (1970), comments expressed above; the children felt out of control - they were unsure what to expect from these objects³⁰.

4.1.2 Threatened by the 'Real Thing' - Being Watched, Looked At, or Followed:

Another aspect of this feeling of anxiety was expressed particularly when the children saw the mummy masks and mummy heads arranged in three cases in the darkened funerary room. When the children turned the corner and spotted them they said:

It looks like people are watching you every move you make. They looked real.

I felt scared as well really but the ... it looked as though they were looking

at you from wherever you were, and they were very stern - scary-looking.

Wherever I walked they were all looking at me.

In this instance the children felt scared by being what they perceived to be under the surveillance of the objects. They believed the object's eyes were all over them, staring, watching, looking and following them everywhere they went. Citing Lacan, Elkins (1996), explains how seeing is a reciprocal process; he says:

My gaze finds its answer in the person I see, so that I can see its effect in her eyes. If I am looking at an inanimate object, it has a certain presence - it looks back, and again I can understand that as the echo of my gaze. I see and I can see that I am seen, so each time I see I also see myself being seen. Vision becomes a kind of cat's cradle of crossing lines of sight, and Lacan thinks of the whole scene as a kind of trap; we are 'caught', he says, 'manipulated, captured, in the field of vision'. Each object has a certain force, a certain way of resisting or accepting my look and returning that look to me (Elkins,1996:70).

There are a number of salient points here. First, despite the fact that the eyes in the masks were static, the children felt as if their gazes were returned; so much so the eyes seemed to follow them.

I was the only person in the room and their eyes like, followed you, were all over you and it was pretty scary.

Second, by keeping up a steady stare without blinking the eyes became very penetrating, which contributed to the children feeling trapped within the confines of the gaze.

They looked real - scary things - because they ... don't blink so they are just staring at you.

And finally, whilst being spied upon the children felt conscious of the fact that to be seen is to know oneself being seen.

I thought they were like staring at you, wherever you went they were looking at you.

To be stared at by an object is creepy though, and especially creepy when the object has everything to do with death. Could it be that when the children met these stares they were engaging 'authentically' with death? And if so, is that why it became such a 'scary' experience³¹?

These points notwithstanding, I want to comment further on this notion of being aware of being seen, and what it is like to realize that we exist in relation to other people. Sartre (1966), offers this explanation by relating a story of an

inquisitive man who, in the process of peering through a keyhole in a door, loses all sense of himself. Hearing a footstep he immediately realizes that not only is someone else there and they are watching him, but that he has been caught in the act of spying. This precipitates a feeling of unease by being observed like an object; and a feeling of shame (Sartre,1966:259-261). Having cited this tale I am not suggesting that the children felt a sense of shame as they were stared at, watched or followed, but I am suggesting that they felt discomfort. Just as the man was invading the privacy of the person/people on the other side of the door, objectifying them, so the children felt under scrutiny by being objectified by the objects' stare.

4.2. FEELING 'IN TOUCH' WITH THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS:

While the mummy masks evoked fear or discomfort compelling some of the children to flee, other objects tended to make them feel 'in touch' with these ancient people. This feeling was often expressed in embodied language when the children had direct contact with the objects through their finger tips, and through a sense of being held by their vision. The following statements describe this sense of nearness.

I couldn't believe I was holding something that had been in an ancient Egyptian's hand - five thousand years ago ... like it's in mine now.

It was scary at first but I felt part of the ancient Egyptians.

Wow, I'm actually holding something an ancient Egyptian's put his head on.

To have the opportunity of touching what an ancient Egyptian had touched was quite compelling for the children. It was as if their hands made immediate contact with the ancients who had either owned or perhaps made the object. They perceived a direct link - a thread - which joined up yesterday with today; a drawing alongside too.

In Chapter 5, I cited a passage from Penelope Lively's children's novel, *A Stitch in Time*, when a young girl discovers a Victorian sampler and feels connected or 'in touch' with the child who had embroidered it. She says, 'And it came to her, as she turned to go into the house, that places are like clocks, They've got all the time in them there's ever been, everything that's happened. They go on and on, with things that have happened hidden in them, if you can find them,

like you find the fossils if you break the rock' (1976:36-37). I suggest for the children, the objects were rather like the sampler - they connected them in an imaginative way to the ancient Egyptians.

4.2.1 Feeling 'In Touch' with the Ancient Egyptians - Empathy/Sympathy:

Even though most of the objects could not be held, they had a strong hold on the children nevertheless. For example, when the mummified and funerary exhibits were seen, many children were moved to express feelings of empathy and sympathy³². They said:

I felt sorry for all the people who died in the funeral section.

When I touched the cat's death mask I felt sad.

I felt sorry for them - I felt sorry for them dying.

David Levin tells us both that to behold is to be beholden and beheld, but also that, 'it is a being-with which cares'. He explains:

Crying is the root of human vision. This suggests that compassion, the capacity to feel what others are feeling and take their suffering to heart, is an essential factor in the fulfilment of our vision: a fulfilment already manifest in our capacity to be so moved by what we see that we break down and cry. Compassion is our visionary fulfilment because the sociality of feeling-with is always already inscribed into the flesh of our visionary organs (Levin,1988:252).

Although there were no visible tears, the children were affected by the objects which were either dead or which connoted death, and expressed a sense of sadness. Because we are enmeshed in a world with others, seeing those tiny mummified animals and that human hand was to experience the reality of dead bodies. For some this elicited disgust and horror, but for others it evoked concern. However, though this concern was focused on those who died, it was not possible to deduce whether the concept of death was felt by the children in terms of their own mortality³³.

4.2.2 Feeling 'In Touch' with the Ancient Egyptians - Admiration:

Another way in which the children felt 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians was feeling a sense of admiration for their craftsmanship and skill. For example:

I felt fascinated by how many things they made.

I felt amazed that someone just using a paint brush and their normal everyday tools could make something like that, while we with our machines can't.

It made me feel that the Egyptians were really, really clever to do that with no technical machines.

To appreciate how skilfully so many different materials and techniques had been employed was to stand in awe of these people, to look up to them. As the children were drawn closer to the objects through their fascination and wonder, they not only noticed how accomplished the artistry was, but became aware of how each item was crafted and invested with care. Heidegger (1968), uses an analogy of a cabinetmaker's apprentice who, 'makes himself answer and respond above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes slumbering within wood ... In fact, this relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft' (1968:14-15). He also explains how the 'strength and skill in our hands' is that quality which creates a 'handicraft'³⁴. He says:

But the craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes - and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others. The hand holds. The hand carries. The hand designs and signs, presumably because man is a sign. Two hands fold into one, a gesture meant to carry man into the great oneness. The hand is all this, and this is the true handicraft (Heidegger,1968:16).

When we are young we put our hands into the hands of adults - we look up to them and trust them to lead us safely through childhood. Within this protective grasp there is mutual human responsiveness; a corresponding sense of dependence and responsibility. As the children gazed at the objects in their hands it seemed to me as if they were literally putting their hands into the hands of the ancient Egyptians; not merely to feel the materials, but to feel the marvellous strength and skill of the craft. It was through this feeling of admiration then that they became in touch.

4.2.3 Feeling 'In Touch' with the Ancient Egyptians - Responsibility:

When I reflected on the children's descriptions of handling the objects, I noticed a further resonance with Heidegger's notion of care. For most children handling became a very conscious action of contact. They said:

I went really slowly when I was holding it just in case it slipped.

You had a responsibility and you were thinking, wow, you know, these really belonged to people so many years ago, so you took care of them.
Ancient Egyptian objects are very precious - don't be rough with them.

I was scared that I was going to drop it and break it; because they were so delicate and if I dropped it - ooh!

Although always unsure how the children would respond to the objects, I noticed how careful they were when they began to touch: had the fragility of the objects elicited a sensitive and sympathetic response? Levin speaks about touch and response-ability; he explains:

Touch is 'the way' to 'true vision' because the field's primordial *hold* on our gaze yields the lesson of *tact*, and this is an essential development in our capacity for 'true vision'. The response-ability of vision is already made possible through the inherent tactfulness, often seriously disturbed of our visionary being ... It is a response-ability to the *presencing* of Being which lets it come forth, lets it be present, without needing to master and dominate presence (Levin,1988:254,245).

4.3 FEELING SPECIAL AND GRATEFUL:

Having the chance to take up that response-ability was one aspect of the children's experience which was immensely valued. And, as I listened to the children and read their statements, I sensed that they felt special - as if they had been chosen or privileged as if they had been let into a secret. They said:

I felt so privileged to be holding a four thousand year old object.

When my partner and I touched the servant³⁵ I was fascinated. It was then I realized how privileged I was.

I felt quite special because there are so many people in England and we're the ones who went to see it.

It was very special because I'll never get another chance to touch Egyptian artefacts.

Part of that response-ability was expressing gratitude for the experience, for the other people who had made it possible. Positioning themselves vis à vis others made them all the more aware of their own good fortune.

Summary:

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to interpret the experiential meanings of children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects, and in the process I have used the four phenomenological existentials as lenses through which to focus my analysis. The phenomenological discussion gives the reader a chance, not merely to approach an understanding of what this embodied experience felt like from a child's perspective but, to find a resonance with their own human being. The human emotions explored above have both revealed and yet concealed facets of the human lifeworld, which helps us appreciate that the quest for understanding is always spun within a web of

experience which is felt spatially, bodily, temporally and relationally.

Notes:

1. This sense of interconnection, whether near or far, is an essential facet of Heidegger's explanation of the 'fourfold', whereby humankind exists as one component in a matrix which includes the earth, the sky and the divinities. 'By a primal oneness the four - earth, sky, divinities and mortals - belong together as one'(Heidegger,1975:149). Therefore, to consider any one component is impossible without seeing the other three in relief.

2. Eighteen children or fourteen percent of the children who were interviewed mentioned that the museum felt like stepping inside a tomb.

3. See Note 9 in Chapter 4 for an explanation of the phrase 'really like'.

4. Six children, or four percent, who were interviewed expressed a desire to run away from the exhibition.

5. The brackets around the word 'Who?' indicate my question.

6. In a similar way to Chapter 5, I use two types of writing to help bring out the meanings of the children's experiences, namely: accounts of lived experience (recorded events which actually happened), and fictional accounts including poetry drawn from the imagination of various writers.

7. Heidegger's explanation of 'authentic' experience is explained in the Lived Body section below. See p. 283.

8. See Note 1 above.

9. In Heidegger's chapter entitled, 'The Thing', in his text, *Poetry, Language Thought* (1975), he describes how we become aware of the existence of things through nearness and 'thingliness'. He explains:

Nearness is at work in bringing near, as the thinging of the thing. Thinging, the things stays the united four, earth sky, divinities and mortals, in the simple onefold of their self-united fourfold (Heidegger,1975:178,181).

10. Of course it is possible to have experiences of people through cyberspace but I do not include these experiences here.

11. For a fuller explanation of the way children begin discovering themselves, things and other people see Section 4, 'Lived Human Relations' below.

12. See Gadamer's explanation of the 'fusion of horizons' in Chapter 4, p. 162.

13. The phrase, 'circle of the unexpressed', is used by Lipps. What is said or expressed through gesture is always a bringing to form out of 'the infinity of the unsaid'. As one attempts to understand either word or gesture one is drawn into a new circle with new questions and answers (Linge, in Gadamer,1976: xxxii).

14. This notion of being beholden also has resonances with several other shared themes namely: feeling 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians; feeling compassion for dead Egyptians and their animals; feeling admiration for ancient Egyptian skill and craftsmanship; and feeling privileged and grateful to have had the opportunity of experiencing the ancient objects.

15. See Chapter 2 pp. 61-64 for a discussion of the phenomenon of wonder which triggers the desire to question.

16. Heidegger explains how interacting with material things in the world is characteristic of care. He says:

Accordingly our existential interpretation of Dasein as care requires pre-ontological confirmation. This lies in demonstrating that no sooner has Dasein expressed anything about itself to itself, than it has already interpreted itself as care (*cura*) even though it has already done so pre-ontologically ... the phenomena which are most intimately connected with the question of Being [are] readiness-to-hand and present-at-hand, as attributes of entities-with-the-world (Heidegger,1973:227-8).

Objects which are ready-to-hand are those which we use intimately, almost unconsciously; and those which are present-at-hand are those which are not yet directly involved in use. These terms are not rigid however, because objects can slip from one category to another with use or disuse. See also Section 4 - Lived Human Relations - for a further explanation of care as responsibility.

17. Over eighty percent of the children who were interviewed and wrote letters to me used the word *amazed*, though they did not all interpret it in the same way.

18. Heidegger (1973), identifies three points of view from which fear as a state-of-mind may be analyzed. These are: *that in the face of which* we fear; *fearing as such*, and *that which* fear fears *about*. The fearsome is something we encounter within-the-world. It is threatening and detrimental in the way in which we not only perceive ourselves to be its target, but more particularly how that targeting will be manifested. Part of this fear is its 'queer' nature and its striking distance; so much so that, whilst it remains a long way off its fearsomeness stays veiled; but, if it hovers the indeterminacy of its proximity can aggravate its fearsomeness. When we *fear as such* - we fear the fearsome explicitly as that which has those detrimental/threatening qualities; and, in the process of fearing fear becomes our state-of-mind. *That which* fear fears *about* is that very entity which is afraid namely, Dasein. As Heidegger says, 'proximally and for the most part, Dasein is in terms of what it is concerned with. When this is endangered, Being-alongside is threatened'. Furthermore, when we become afraid *for* others our own state-of-being, as Dasein which is a Being-with, is threatened, thus it is experienced as 'being-afraid-for-oneself' (Heidegger,1973:181). The nature of that which we fear, its proximity, and the way in which we become aware of it all affect our fears. When we encounter something fearful very suddenly fear becomes *alarm*. But, if it is something which is totally unfamiliar then the fear is experienced as *dread*. If both suddenness and total unfamiliarity are encountered then fear becomes *terror*. Even timidity, shyness, misgiving and becoming startled are all modes of fear (Heidegger, 1973:179-182).

19. A number of texts which discuss how children make sense of death and dying, are as follows: Lansdown (1991), WynneJones (1985), Smilansky (1987), Jackson and Colwell (2002), and Baudrillard (1994). In his paper on 'The Child's Concept of Death', Lansdown (1991), a haematologist/oncologist, reveals the findings of his research using data from his own patients and three other studies. One such study is Kane (1979), who lists the components of children's concept of death and the average age when they are attained, they are: realization - 3 years; separation - 5 years; immobility - 5 years; irrevocability - 6 years; causality - 6 years; dysfunctionality - 6 years; universality - 7 years; insensitivity - 8 years; and appearance - 12 years (Kane, in Lansdown:1991:2). He also tells us that we tend to underestimate how much children understand about death; that they have an understanding of heaven regardless of their religious backgrounds; that death is often regarded as a journey on the way to heaven; and that separation is one of the most important components of the concept of death (Lansdown,1991:3-6).

Like Lansdown (1991), WynneJones's (1985), data is in the form of conversational excerpts which offer insights. She explains - because human beings have a strong survival instinct any idea which threatens it is therefore associated with the fear of loss, which in itself is associated with separation from the familiar and perceived as mysterious. Among her findings we learn that, children's understanding of death can often come from the media - that is to say, from video nasties, films and newspapers, and be associated with horror,

sadism and fear, or even with ghosts, skeletons and corpses, war, famine and disaster. This can affect their sense of morality, so for instance, death (which is often associated with fear) may not always be associated with sadness because the death of a villain might be deemed to be justifiable (WynneJones,1985:29). While reincarnation was a popular understanding of what happens after death, the notion of death as extinction was rarely expressed. Some children felt their life history had a bearing on what happened to them after death, and a few even claimed hell awaited those who had behaved badly. For the children who spoke about suffering many claimed death was an end to it, that life stopped functioning, and that the person would be at peace. And, though some were imaginative about what might happen in heaven, others regarded death as inevitable and 'a pain in the neck' (WynneJones,1985:30-37). She also reveals that in Western society death is often regarded as a taboo subject because people tend to die in hospitals away from public view; in consequence children, like many adults, rarely experience a death (WynneJones,1985:16). Jackson and Colwell (2002), concur, and say, 'We also see the professionalization of health care, not only in terms of general health, but also childbirth and death ... this notion of death has become the new taboo, the shameful subject about which we cannot speak in public ... but death does seem to hold a fascination which both repels and attracts us' (Jackson and Colwell,2002:16,18).

When Smalinsky (1987), discusses children's understanding of death in terms of irreversibility, finality, causality, inevitability and old age, she divides her sample into first grade (6-7 years), second grade (8-9 years), and third and fourth grade (10-12 years). By the time children reach the first grade 87% understand irreversibility, 74% understand finality, 88% understand causality, 63% understand inevitability, and 77% understand old age. When interviewing children in the second grade over 90% understand finality, irreversibility and old age, and the understanding of old age as the cause of death rose by 33%. When it came to the third and fourth grades their understanding of death was equated with an adult's conceptions (Smilansky,1987:43-51).

Though Baudrillard (1994), does not discuss children's understanding of death, he does discuss how objects play a part in our 'passage from birth to death'. He explains:

Objects help us to resolve the irreversibility, this relentless passage from birth to death ... objects are being invested with what 'ought' instead to be invested in human relationships. And yet the immense power of objects to regulate our lives depends on just this option. In our era of faltering religious and ideological authorities, they are by way of becoming the consolation of consolations, an everyday myth capable of absorbing all our anxieties about time and death ... what man wants from objects is not the assurance that he can somehow outlive himself, but the sense that from now on he can live out his life uninterruptedly and in a cyclical mode, and thereby symbolically transcend the realities of an existence before whose irreversibility and contingency he remains powerless (Baudrillard, in Elsner and Cardinal,1994:16-17).

20. The word 'cool' is regularly used today meaning excellent, first-rate or wonderful (Green, 2000:269). It can also mean that quality of being fashionably attractive or impressive (Pearsall and Hanks,2001:404). In these particular instances it appeared to be experienced as distinctively *other*.

21. Although this study did not set out to specifically explore the teaching of history to primary school children in a museum, it focuses on the meanings of their experiences with ancient Egyptian objects, the character of their historical consciousness or understanding of the past (both people, things and events) and the way it is constructed has become a major issue. In Chapter 7, I discuss the work of Dickinson, Lee and Rogers (1984), Walsh (1992), Cooper (1995), Nichol and Fines (1997), Husbands and Pendry (2000), O'Hara and O'Hara (2001), Dickinson, Gordon and Lee (2001), Kavanagh (1996, 2000), and Mack (2003), with particular reference to experiencing 'real' objects, and the role of memory, imagination and empathy in the process of interpreting the past.

22. When the children claimed that they 'felt so old', 'ancient' or even 'like an ancient

Egyptian themselves', it was an empathic or intuitive feeling - instinctively they felt that way.

23. Although the meaning of the word 'natural' is, like all words, dependent on the historical and cultural context in which it is used, Heidegger (1967), suggests that, 'for the Enlightenment the 'natural' was what could be proved and comprehended according to certain principles of reason based upon itself, which was, therefore, appropriate to every human as such and to mankind in general (Heidegger, 1967:39). However, to take a particular example of how Charles Darwin's work on natural selection in his, *Origin of the Species* (1859), influenced the meaning of the word natural, Williams (1983), says:

What Darwin did that was new was to describe some of the processes by which new species developed and to generalize these as *natural selection*. It is ironic that this radically new metaphor, in which nature was seen as discarding as well as developing various forms of life, was sustained within a continuing description of the process as evolution, with its sense of unrolling what already existed or maturing what was already performed ... Nevertheless, as the new understanding of the origins of species spread, evolution lost, in biology, its sense of inherent design and became a process of natural historical development. It had happened because it had happened, and would go on happening because it was a natural process (Williams, 1983: 121-122).

When the word natural is used to describe natural justice, natural kinds, natural sciences or natural theology it confers a specific meaning on these concepts. For example, in philosophy 'natural kinds' denote what is 'made by nature' as opposed to what is 'made by man'. However, while animals are 'naturally' differentiated by species, distinguishing between flowers and weeds is an artificial construction which is made according to certain 'man-made' criteria (Bullock and Trombley, 1999:563). When Sartre uses the word natural he suggests that human beings need to label and categorize objects as an inherent or 'natural' way of controlling them. In other words, by assessing this human reaction to be 'natural' Sartre (1938/2000), deems it to be universally experienced - thus, can it be assumed that not to experience this would be 'unnatural'? Entering into the 'natural' versus the 'cultural' debate, Dissanayake (1995), says:

Western thinking is heavily dualistic separating object from subject, observation from participation, soul from body, spirit from flesh - culture from nature. Furthermore, control, domination and subjugation of the base, raw, or natural is a strong Western theme. Hence it has been all too easy for Western thought to equate 'nature' with primitive people ... A number of recent anthropological studies (e.g. Gillison 1980; Strathern 1980; Turnbull 1961) have declared that certainly not all societies make a culture/nature distinction where culture transforms or controls nature, and that in many that do make this distinction nature is considered to be an exalted domain not subject to control but instead viewed as a source of power from which to partake ... these prevailing currents in anthropology today ... [which] encourage us to examine the presuppositions of Western culture, point out where we have misrepresented and shortchanged the lives, values and worldviews of other peoples; and suggest where we can expand our own appreciation of these lives, values and world views (Dissanayake, 1995, 74-75).

This paragraph points to the fact that when something is characterized as natural we invoke a value system which can never be taken as universally held or absolute, but rather indicative of a particular cultural and historical position. Where this study is concerned, while the children's 'spookiness', 'creepiness' or 'weirdness' in response to the ancient objects may well, as Sartre (1938/2000), suggests, be a valid account of their feeling out of control, to describe this as 'natural' is making a very bold claim because even emotional responses are encultured.

24. In 'The Systems of Collecting', Baudrillard (1994), like Sartre (1938/2000), has some

interesting ideas about how our relationships with objects are underpinned by control in both a practical and abstract sense. He reasons:

Objects that occupy our daily lives are in fact the objects of a passion, that of personal possession, whose quotient of invested affect is in no way inferior to that of any other variety of human passion ... for, while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone...thus any given object can have two functions: it can be utilized, or it can be possessed. The first function has to do with the subject's project of asserting practical control within the real world, the second with an enterprise of abstract mastery whereby the subject seeks to assert himself as an autonomous totality outside the world ... for the child, collecting represents the most rudimentary way to exercise control over the outer world: by laying things out, grouping them, handling them (Baudrillard, in Elsner and Cardinal,1994:7-9).

There is a resonance here with Heidegger's (1973), categories of objects as *ready-to-hand* and *present-at-hand*, explained above.

25. These terms are used by Henri Wallon (1949), in Merleau-Ponty(1964a:121).

26. Merleau-Ponty draws upon the research of Frenkel-Brunswik, Rostand, Dolto-Marette, Guillaume, Wallon, Lacan, Bühler and Piaget, in an essay entitled, *The Child's Relations with Others*, in his work, *The Primacy of Perception*, (1964a).

27. Merleau-Ponty explains that because a child's visual and muscular abilities are so immature at birth perception is impossible. Consequently a child will explore with its mouth which means its world is centred and limited spatially to that area. Wallon (1949), has remarked however, that through the process of breathing a child already has an in-built sense of space. Over the first few weeks the child gradually becomes aware of other parts of its body especially those connected to expression. With the development of the neural pathways in the brain from three to six months, the child will begin to accommodate data from a purely introceptive method to one which is extroceptive too. In addition, it also develops a sense of equilibrium which supplies a sense of bodily location. As both these faculties mature the child becomes aware of itself integrated in the world(Merleau-Ponty:1964a:122-3).

See also Bruner's, 'Eye, Hand and Mind' (1969:223-253).

28. Julian Thomas (1996), also explains how a child comes to an understanding of self and other, and how this is aligned to the acquisition of language. He says:

According to Lacan, a young child reaches a certain stage of cognitive development at which it will recognise itself in a mirror, which coincides with the child's entry into the symbolic order, and language. Having recognised this first category of Self, however, the child must go on to oppose it to the second category, the Other. Rather than a unified world of self, the child must enter a sundered realm of Self and Other, signifier and signified, where it becomes possible to classify the things of the world (including the self) as discursive objects (Thomas,1996:41).

29. Although there has been much discussion in previous chapters of the 'real' as a seamless, pre-reflective union of the body and the world, as opposed to a reflective, conscious state of knowing reality, I want to refer to the children's particular experiences of 'real' objects in the Myers Museum which derived much of its impact from the difference between experiencing two and three dimensionality. Seeing a book illustration of, for example, a mummy case is markedly different from the experience of its concrete form. One possible explanation for this is the way in which three dimensional form not only helps us understand our own bodies as they interact with it, but in the process gain a sense of space and time. This sense of interconnectedness which is bound up with our sense of bodily

identity, was mentioned in Chapter 2. Although Martin (1981), refers to sculpture, the effect of experiencing a sense of embodiment when objects are encountered is comparable, he explains: 'Sculpture satisfies a fundamental craving of human sensibility ... [it] returns us to the vital plenitude of being-in-the-world, to being in the midst of things as part of them (Martin,1981:79). In 'The Thing' from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger (1975), discusses what it is like to experience a jug. He says, 'The jug's essential nature, its presencing, so experienced and thought of in these terms, is what we call *thing*' (Heidegger, 1975:174). He then goes on to explain that the word *thing* in German means a gathering, and in particular a gathering or matter which initiates discussion by having relevance for men. Those things which have a bearing on men are what is real, or in Latin, *realitas* or *res*. 'In Latin *ens* means that which is present in the sense of standing forth here. *Res* becomes *ens*, that which is present in the sense of what is put here, put before us, presented' (Heidegger, 1975:177). It is this presence, which is experienced as nearness, which seemed to strike the children. Thus, as the particular qualities of the objects coalesced as a gathering in/as the object, the children experienced them as a presence. While it would be interesting to conjecture whether replicas might have the same presence, all the objects which the children experienced were authentic and therefore there was no opportunity to compare. When many of the objects which had facial or bodily features were experienced by the children their presence was felt dramatically - they were real enough to come alive!

When objects are displayed in museums they are deracinated and thereby divested of their original functions. In the Myers Museum the children had no option therefore but to view these objects as practically defunct specimens within arrangements which were ideologically constructed. Consequently, the reality of the objects which the children constructed for themselves owed a great deal not only to their memories and imagination but to the character of these displays. Heidegger (1973), expounds on our relationship with objects and the meanings which we ascribe to them in terms of their being *ready-to-hand* or *present-at-hand*. He explains: when, for example, we seize hold of a hammer and begin hammering it ceases to be an object which we contemplate, rather it becomes an object of use - almost as if it is an extension of our hand. This renders the hammer *ready-to-hand*. However, if we observe the hammer but have no use for it, it remains *present-at-hand*. Thus, objects float between these two categories according to the way in which we interact with them (Heidegger,1973:98-104). Because objects are contemplated in museums they will always remain *present-at-hand*. See also Chapter 7 for a discussion of the 'real' vis à vis the virtual.

30. A possible reason why the children imagined the objects 'might come alive and break through the glass', is the recent release of the popular culture film, 'The Mummy' (2000), and 'The Mummy Returns' (2002), where this actually occurred.

31. See previous references to Heidegger's discussion of 'being-toward-death' p.283.

32. While to empathize with someone means to have the ability or understanding to share their feelings, from the Greek 'em' in + 'pathos' feeling, to sympathize means to go one step further and show or express these feelings - in other words to suffer with them, from the Greek 'sumpatheia' 'with' + 'pathos' feeling (Pearsall and Hanks,2001:604,1879).

33. For children's understanding of death see Note 19 above.

34. In his essay on, 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger (1993b), discusses the meaning of the ancient Greek word *techne* as encapsulating not merely the skills and activities of the craft worker, but 'the arts of the mind'. Thus *techne* also embodied what the Greeks called *poiesis* or poetry as a bringing forth into presence as a way of disclosing. Modern technology (as a means to an end) has done much to obscure *poiesis* at the expense of efficiency. The children's responses to the objects would seem to resonate not merely with the *techne* of the ancient craftworker in the sense of skill but in the sense of *poiesis* (Heidegger,1993b:318,317,312).

35. When this child referred to being fascinated by touching the 'servant' she means the ancient Egyptian 'shabti'. These ceramic figures represented the pharaoh's workers or

servants who would do his/her bidding in the afterlife. Traditionally they would be buried in the tomb with the mummified body. See illustrations of the handling collection: (ref. figs. 3.6 and 3.16) pp. 108 - 110.

CHAPTER SEVEN
TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS
OF THE CHILDREN'S ENCOUNTER:
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY PEDAGOGY,
PRIMARY HISTORY AND MUSEUM EDUCATION

Introduction

The opening lines of this study began with Igor Mitoraj's description of his experience of ancient Egyptian sculpture; for him the, 'magnetic force that this ancient civilisation releases', prompted him to reflect that, 'art is the real time machine that allows us to approach so far a shore' (Mitoraj, in *The Artists, and The Trustees of the British Museum*, 1994:22). These statements motivated me to question why ancient Egyptian objects continue to captivate and inspire successions of generations¹, and more significantly, to wonder whether ancient Egyptian works of art can indeed help us travel to the far off shores of human experience.

In my quest I have tried to find out not merely what it is like for children to experience the wonder and mystery which these ancient objects embody, but have begun to move towards an understanding of what this experience means. Throughout this research the children have been *my inspiration*; they have led me to encounter lived experience from a new perspective, and in the process have made me realize how a greater understanding of 'human being' can profit the practice of primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education.

To demonstrate how this understanding has implications for these areas, this chapter aims initially, to comment on what both Chapters 5 and 6 reveal about the experiential meanings of primary school children's encounters with ancient Egyptian objects. Second, to delineate the areas of primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education. Third, to describe how these experiential meanings speak to specific issues in those areas. Fourth, to show how this research makes an original contribution to knowledge. Fifth, to point out how this study informs research methods in education. And finally, to indicate how this thesis might prompt directions for further research.

1. THE EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S ENCOUNTERS WITH ANCIENT EGYPTIAN OBJECTS:

The work of Husserl (1982), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Heidegger (1973), and Gadamer (1986), van Manen (1990), insists that to find the essence of a particular experience is to point to the characteristics without which it could not be what it is; and point out how these characteristics inform an understanding of the structures which make it meaningful (1990:10,26). To do justice to this objective the children's encounter was described in Chapter 5, followed by an analysis and interpretation of the common themes of the experience in Chapter 6. In the process of reflecting on the experience through writing and rewriting a deeper understanding of its meanings began to emerge. Specifically, when the children encountered these distinctively mysterious Egyptian objects, their feelings of amazement, wonder, curiosity, empathy, fear, fear/excitement, and being moved imaginatively, were all experienced in embodied ways. Furthermore, when encountering the mummified and funerary objects, their responses were more dramatically experienced.

By approaching the interpretation of the experience through the lens of the phenomenological existentials - of 'lived space', 'lived body', 'lived time' and 'lived human relations', I discovered the various, and often complex, manifestations of each common theme. Moreover, as I studied the children's verbal and gestural expressions, I found that whilst the perceptions of their encounter drew heavily on their memory and imagination through their visual experiences, their tactile/haptic experiences were exceptionally compelling.

2. THE INTER-RELATION OF PRIMARY PEDAGOGY, PRIMARY HISTORY AND MUSEUM EDUCATION:

Before extrapolating how these findings have implications for primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education, I need to define these areas to demonstrate how they impinge upon each other.

As all three practices involve a holistic responsibility for children, I want to consider two definitions of pedagogy:

Pedagogy is any conscious activity of one person designed to enhance the learning of another (Mortimore and Watkins,1999:3).

From an etymological point of view, a pedagogue is a man or woman who stands in a caring relation to children: In the idea of leading or guiding there is a 'taking by the hand' in the sense of watchful encouragements ... leading in the sense of accompanying the child and living with the child in such a way as to provide in the adult-child relation a sense of protection, direction and orientation for the child's life ... But one must grow out of (*educere*: to lead out of) the world of childhood. My world of adulthood becomes an invitation, a beckoning to the child (*educare*: to lead into). Leading means going first, and in going first you can trust me, for I have tested the ice ... Although my going first is no guarantee of success for you (because the world is not without risks and dangers) in the pedagogical relationship there is a more fundamental guarantee: No matter what, I am here. And you can count on me (van Manen,1991:38).

In the first quotation the teacher and pupil are positively positioned in relation to the learning objective; but in the second, there is a far broader interpretation of pedagogy. By taking the ancient Greek model of the pedagogue who led children to and from school, van Manen's (1993), description embraces not only leading, caring and trust, but includes *protection*, *direction* and *orientation*. Here, pedagogy means having an understanding of how children develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and morally², and taking a responsibility for bringing it about in a holistic way. This is the pedagogic paradigm I use in this chapter, and accordingly, the one which informs my interpretation of primary history and museum education.

What contribution can studying events and people from the past make towards a child's holistic development? By focusing on historical sources children can learn to appreciate how continuity, change, causes and consequences are crucial not merely to human experience as time, but to a personal understanding of the past, present and future (Nichol and Fines,1997:111-125) and (Lee, in Lee, Slater, Walsh and White,1992:23). Furthermore, because historical evidence represents human behaviour and human endeavour, children need to develop a range of skills which will include not only observation, inference and deduction (Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson,1990:5; Dickinson, Gordon and Lee,2001:197), but also imagination and empathy³ (Lee, in Dickinson, Lee, and Rogers,1984:89-101; O'Hara and O'Hara, 2001:92; Nichol and Fines,1997:21-22). As they attempt to gain real historical insight they should become aware that just as attitudes, feelings and values affected the people of the past, so they too are similarly affected (Husbands and Pendry, in Arthur and Phillips,2000:125-134). To understand the partiality of historical interpretation

is therefore important⁴, but to grasp that an understanding of human being is fundamental to this process is even more important⁵. In terms of history then, the findings of this research emphasize that an embodied engagement with objects as evidence, particularly through the use of touch, can enable children to make meaningful cognitive and empathetic responses which help them gain not only an understanding of people from other times and cultures, but a grasp of themselves in the light of their own meta-understanding.

If primary history can promote these cognitive, emotional and social skills, a museum is the place which offers immeasurable scope for practising them. Opportunities to interact with 'real' authentic objects from different times and cultures, can provide children with stimulating, multi-sensuous experiences, as Hooper-Greenhill (1994a), attests:

What museums can do extremely effectively and perhaps in a unique way, is give people an experience of the real thing such that a desire to know more ensues. Museums can be phenomenally successful in terms of increasing motivation to learn, in enabling people to discover and develop new passions, in making a previously mundane set of facts suddenly come alive and become meaningful(Hooper-Greenhill,1994a:1).

It is this type of experience which can stimulate children's curiosity, stir their memories and imagination, and help them create their own picture of the world in times gone by (Mack, 2003; and Lee, 1984). However, for children to engage with a collection in a meaningful/educative way, it is vital for museum educators to know how a museum experience can be affected by the physical, social and personal aspects of museum contexts. Falk and Dierking (1997), and Hooper-Greenhill (1994a), explain:

Museums have the ability to present reality; simply, dramatically and more than anything, authentically. The essence of the museum experience is the ability for an individual to see real things, and under the best of circumstances, within real and meaningful physical contexts. Too often, though, museums do not create compelling contexts for their objects. People need and want to know how things physically interrelate, Museums, perhaps, more than any other educational medium ever devised, can facilitate the making of meaningful connections between the intellectual and physical world (Falk and Dierking,1997:14).

For some people, 'education' means the accumulation of facts and information. This is a very narrow view, and it is not appropriate in museums and galleries. Alternative meanings for 'education' stress the process of learning rather than the outcomes, and include affective as well as cognitive elements ... Although it is of course possible to acquire information in museums, museums are no better at imparting information than other places (Hooper-Greenhill,1994a:1).

This research not only stresses the value of museums for providing first hand encounters with ‘real’ authentic objects, but also shows how compelling multi-sensuous experiences can be for inspiring the child with wonder and curiosity, and supplying the trigger for motivation and learning thereby drawing on their embodied resources.

3.IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH FOR PRIMARY PEDAGOGY, PRIMARY HISTORY AND MUSEUM EDUCATION:

As the protection, direction and orientation of the child are common to all three practices, I adopted them as a structure for discussing the relevance of this research for primary education. However, the main issues which underpin my discussion are as follows: the *feel* of contexts; the *feel* of the ‘real’; and *feeling* connected.

3.1 PROTECTION:

3.1.1 The Feel of Contexts - Feeling Afraid - Feeling Secure?

In Chapters 5 and 6 I described how the combination of the variable lighting conditions and the ancient objects created a very potent atmosphere in the Myers Museum. For some children this was a very frightening encounter, for others it spelt wonder and amazement, and for another group contrasting feelings of fear and excitement were experienced. Though Day(1990), describes how contexts can affect behaviour, and Falk and Dierking (1994), demonstrate how museum contexts can influence learning, neither included statements which revealed what these experiences ‘really felt like’⁶. Seamon(2002), on the other hand revealed that the way we experience the phenomena of places in terms of here/there, being enclosed/exposed, or threatened/secure will affect our feelings and our behaviour. With knowledge of the children’s embodied experience at hand, I want to consider how crucial contexts can be for children’s security, and accordingly suggest some implications for primary practice.

The safety and security of children is of paramount importance for every parent and teacher, as van Manen (1991), and Bollnow (1989), attest. And generally speaking, for those who assume this responsibility, the younger the

child the more important an issue it is. Merleau-Ponty (1962), reminded us that we do not experience space in terms of dimensions but through our relations with things; familiarity of place, things and people therefore, is a bonding; it means being interconnected or 'being-with'⁷ which, though crucial for a sense of personal wellbeing, can often be taken for granted⁸. Familiarity for a child is vital to a sense of well-being⁹; whether at home amongst its family, or in the school environment with its common areas and classroom/s, amongst its peers and teachers¹⁰. Thus, when a child encounters a new context, in a museum for example, with objects which are not only 'real' but mysteriously¹¹ ancient, then it will not only fail to recognise the environment, but it may find its sense of identity undermined. Feeling weird, funny and strange by exhibiting shivery, tingling, creepy sensations is what a sense of vulnerability can really feel like¹².

This state of unfamiliarity, or not knowing, disoriented the children - and, as they began to feel afraid, their memories¹³ and imagination played tricks on them¹⁴. Moreover, when they experienced the mummified animals and the mummified human hand, the fear of death looked them straight in the eye. Heidegger (1973), has much to say about death, and about how our reluctance to embrace death as part of life leads us to live an 'inauthentic' existence. The children's particular fear of death was complex including the contemplation of what their own dead body would look like; the dread of not knowing what lies beyond life; and compassion for those who had already died¹⁵. Every expression of fear, whether it was exposure to danger, the likelihood of danger or the vague possibility of danger was very keenly felt by the children, and as such signalled a warning that their security was under threat.

However, for the children who encountered the objects and the museum as an amazing, or alternatively as a fearful and yet exciting experience, safety and risk were continually in question¹⁶. In these cases familiarity and unfamiliarity played fast and loose with their memories and imagination. For example, while wonder and amazement moved some children to an Egyptian treasury, an Egyptian dinner table or even the banks of the River Nile; others pictured themselves using the objects having already been moved back to ancient time.

In these instances, a genuinely ancient atmosphere was forthcoming, which Nichol and Fines (1997:112-113), tell us is valuable for understanding a sense of historic period or time. However, if the mystery of the museum conjured up thoughts of secret panels for those who thrived on the tension of fear and excitement, the security of the museum also ushered in a ‘scary’ carceral sense of being trapped, entombed or buried.

The efficacy of primary practice rests in no small measure on the security of the child. Notwithstanding, though unfamiliar environments can work positively for some children, they can be experienced negatively for many others. In this research for example, the poignancy of the Myers Museum was felt all the more keenly because many of the objects had a funereal aura¹⁷ and spoke plainly of death.

This research has shown how the children’s *felt* or embodied responses to the ancient Egyptian objects not only ranged from vulnerability to excitement, but were influenced by the museum context. Furthermore, this leads me to suggest that though we as teachers often take the security of environments for granted, that factor for a child can be crucial for its wellbeing and ultimately for its motivation to learn and develop. It is only by taking the time to observe and listen to children, by engaging them in conversation and reflecting on what they tell us, that we can move towards an understanding of their worlds, and learn how to make our own praxis more sensitive, caring and effective.

3.2 DIRECTION:

3.2.1 The Feel of the ‘Real’ - Experiencing Sensuously - ‘Real’ Objects - ‘Real’ Evidence:

One of the most singular aspects of this research was the children’s stunned amazement when they encountered the objects: to have had the opportunity of seeing and *holding* ‘real’ objects was a highly valued feature of their experience. Despite the fact that objects are basic to our existence, contributing features to the landscape of our personal identity, we are prone to take them for granted. For the children though, the fact that they emphasized the word ‘real’ when they noticed them revealed the significance of their existence. They were

authentic - not fake; they were actually there in front of them - not pretend; and some of them were so real they seemed larger than life, or even potentially alive.

In Chapter 6, I discussed the phenomenon of experiencing 'real' objects. There I referred to Martin's (1981), explanation of how the materiality of objects help us gain a sense of embodiedness or corporeality through an engagement with space and time as being-in-the-world. An integral part of this experience was an awareness of the objects special qualities - the brilliance of the blue ceramic; the tiny scarab amulets; the intricate detail of the mummy case, and the texture of the bronze kitten's death mask¹⁸. In Chapter 2, I discussed Merleau-Ponty's (1962), idea of how the qualities of objects give character to human existence by being woven into the fabric of our bodies (1962:235-6). These qualities, which the children experienced in an immediately sensuous way, helped them define not merely the objects' character, but their own existence in relation to the objects. Flannery (1973,74,77), and Madenfort (1972,73), both took their lead from Merleau-Ponty (1962), in explaining how primary perception of the world happens bodily through the senses prior to consciousness of that interaction. Thus, in the moment that consciousness occurs knowing is born; therefore, while reality as we know it is a reflected state of consciousness, the 'real' is an embodied communion with the world.

To discover how the children's embodied responses were manifestations of the 'real', I had to pay attention to their gestures, language and silences. Accordingly, I discovered that their amazement manifested itself in four different ways, namely: by being incapacitated - stopped in their tracks; feeling breathless; being speechless, and being held captive or gripped with fascination; being surprised - by exclaiming 'wow', and feeling incredulity with their eyes opening wider and wider; feeling confounded - by being confused, bewildered, dizzy, strange and weird; and by being horrified - shivery, tingly and cold. All these responses moved me towards a greater understanding of the character of the children's encounter, and as such showed me how valuable 'real' experience is for primary history. However, though scholars, Nichol and Fines (1997:146), and O'Hara and O'Hara (2001:68), agree

that 'real' evidence is very valuable for children's understanding of people from the past, none explores what can be gained from actual contact in experiential terms.

Again in Chapter 6, I also mentioned Heidegger's (1975), discussion of the presence or nearness of objects as a 'standing forth' - either as 'ready-to-hand' or 'present-at-hand' which is grounded on an implicit understanding of both sight and touch. This presence I suggest, seemed to have far more of an impact because of the contrast between the experience of 'real' ancient Egyptian objects, and the two dimensional images available in books, CD Roms, computer games, videos, DVD's, films, television programmes and the internet, with which the children are currently so familiar. Raney (1997), like Duncan (1999), and Baudrillard (1983), endorses this observation. Citing Jonathan Crary's (1990), *Techniques of the Observer*, she comments: 'He reconstructs some of the historical background of the current so-called "digital revolution", seeing it as the continuation of a relentless abstraction of the visual in which "most of the historically important functions of the human eye are being supplanted by practices in which visual images no longer have any reference to the position of an observer in a "real" optically perceived world" ' (Crary, in Raney, 1997:57-58). Furthermore, she lists six characteristics of processing information through digital means which divert the person from making meanings from direct interaction in the world¹⁹. When images are automatically forthcoming from mere keyboard manipulation it is not surprising that a sense of disembodiment ensues (Raney,1997:61).

In Chapter 2, I briefly discussed how Western culture has privileged the visual since the Enlightenment, so that ocular-centricity has gained primacy in knowing the world. Museums too, as a product of Enlightenment thinking, have principally endorsed looking and have contributed to this distorted experience of the cultural world. Atypically, the children in this study were given the opportunity of being literally 'in touch' with historical evidence through a comprehensive interaction of their minds and bodies with the museum objects. Eager to understand the phenomenon of touch I read Montagu (1971), and Lederman's (1985,1997), texts on touch as a physiological phenomenon which

has ramifications for language. I also read Martin(1981), who endorsed Merleau-Ponty's (1962), phenomenological ideas about how vital the senses are, and particularly the compelling sense of touch, for gaining an embodied and symbiotically meaningful engagement with ourselves and the world.

I referred to Bruner's (1966), work which confirmed the value of concrete experience at every level of learning; Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson (1990), and Nichol and Fines (1997), texts for the advantages of using first-hand experiences of objects for historical inquiry; and to consider touching objects in museums, Mitchell (1996), Curtis (1997), Curtis and Goolnik (1995), Hein (1995,98), Ochert (1999), and Hinton (1993), who all support the value of this type of concrete experience. Despite this level of endorsement for 'real' stimulation, which profoundly vindicates the value of learning from authentic objects in museums, none described what it was like to have this embodied experience. To address this omission, I have tried to demonstrate how both children and teachers can gain from exploring the embodied nature of their experiences with objects. Moreover, I have suggested that the value of concrete experiences should be acknowledged as *a very necessary complement* to the symbolic experiences which are so prevalent through the media, and particularly through the overwhelming tide of digital media, which seems to be infiltrating every sphere of our lives²⁰.

In an age when pedagogical research acknowledges the importance of the teacher/child relationship, Gipps and MacGilchrist (1999), stress that children should be encouraged to take responsibility for *constructing* their own learning and reflect on how their learning takes place. Furthermore, when teaching is recommended through lively, questioning, stimulating and open-ended discussions the accent is placed firmly on 'real' encounters (Gipps and MacGilchrist,1999:46-67). Though compulsive viewing of digital imagery militates against the spontaneity of human/social interaction, with its potential for direct, responsive learning from one another; it represents a stark contrast to the compelling nature of 'real' experiences in museums.

3.2.2 The Feel of the 'Real' - 'Wonder + Curiosity' = the Motivation to Question:

In the current technological climate where children are becoming increasingly familiar with digital/two dimensional images, it is not surprising that their first-hand experiences of 'real' ancient objects would be met by expressions of amazement, confusion or disbelief. In Chapter 2, I discussed Heidegger's (1984), thoughts on wonder. For him, while there was a clear distinction between wonder, amazement, astonishment and marvelling, it was only wonder which left the wonderer at a loss, seeking to question the essence of truth(Heidegger,1984:161)²¹. Though I did not set out to prove this maxim, I did discover that on many occasions when the children claimed to be amazed, or showed bodily manifestations of amazement, they did indeed express a sense of curiosity which led them to question what they had experienced, or even the manner in which they had been experiencing. This form of enquiry which arose in response to the objects, seemed to motivate them to find answers²².

The evidence of how 'real' objects can motivate children to investigate for themselves through an immediate sense of wonder and amazement, would suggest that experiencing objects are ideal for the primary history projects both in school through loans²³ and in the museum. To be stopped in one's tracks and have your breath taken away by the sight or touch of an ancient object can certainly make one wonder, precipitating a burning desire to find the answers to numerous questions about that object. Having the added opportunity of confirming what the eye promises through touch makes that 'real' experience carry far more weight. To handle an Egyptian headrest as one child did, feel its smooth wooden surface, stroke its curvaceous form, drop it and watch it fall into three perfectly-shaped pieces, was to wonder how its ancient craftsman managed to design and make it, and even question who had owned and/or used it.

The compulsion to question in response to a 'real' object which is under close scrutiny within a glass case or through touch can be dramatic. Both Nichol and Fines (1997), and Durbin, Morris and Wilkinson (1990), suggest seventy-five and fifty ways respectively, of helping children adopt a 'detective' approach to objects, by classifying observations and formulating and testing hypotheses

(1990:24-27). With the advantage of direct access to a 'real' object, the scope and range of questions becomes larger, touching on: design; function; materials and techniques; texture, owner/s and maker/s; value; aesthetics; history and society (1997:163-167). Furthermore, this type of inquiry can help children gain a greater understanding of time in terms of continuity and change, cause and consequences, and human behaviour and endeavour.

However, though Hooper-Greenhill(2000), maintains that the materiality of the object confirms its function as evidence, the notion of 'the real' can be powerful and enduring, she asserts:

The assumption that vision is autonomous, and that objects are unmediated, needs to be examined. Vision should be aligned with interpretation rather than perception ... The idea of varying interpretations constructed by different gazes has not been seriously accepted until fairly recently ... the gaze is 'caught up in an endless reciprocity'. It is directed at what is visible, but in order to know what to observe, elements or factors must be recognised. But to recognise something, it is necessary to have prior knowledge of it - thus observation depends on already knowing that for which one is searching. This contradictory and complex situation is at the heart of the museum experience (Hooper-Greenhill,2000:14-15,18).

This prior knowledge of which Hooper-Greenhill (2000), speaks, refers to memory. The ways in which the children constructed their own personal meanings from 'real' objects, through the uniqueness of their memory and imagination is my next subject.

3.3 ORIENTATION:

3.3.1 Feeling Connected - Objects, Memories and Imaginings - Constructing Personal Meaning:

When the children exhibited speechlessness and confusion as embodied manifestations of their wonder/amazement they began to question. For example, when viewing the coffin fragment, they asked why it was incomplete; had it just deteriorated over the centuries, or had it been deliberately broken in half? And if so why? In the process of coming to terms with the evidence, their imagination suggested possible answers thereby helping the children make sense of the object. Then, once this was achieved as an element of new understanding, it became accommodated in the child's memory as learning.

Heidegger (1984), describes this process of accommodation, originally initiated

by wonder and questioning, as a type of suffering; and goes further by explaining that as new understanding is absorbed, a transformation takes place in the person's mind. When Bruner (1966), and Hein (1995,98), describe this process of learning as *constructivism*, one can appreciate why the acquisition of understanding is like adding new bricks to a partially constructed building. In their model, transformation comes about as new elements are added and the building's shape evolves. Because everyone's memories and imagination are unique, the knowledge constructed will perforce always be unique.

Though several theories of the imagination and perception have already been considered, I want to discuss Peter Lee's (1984) chapter on 'Historical Imagination' as it is applied to primary history. In addition, I refer to Gaynor Kavanagh's (1996), work on memory and museums in, 'Making Histories, Making Memories'; and John Mack's (2003), text, *The Museum of the Mind - Art and Memory in World Cultures*.

In Chapter 5 and 6, I included various examples where the children seemed to be carried away by the objects, drawing upon their own personal multi-layered memories/pre-understandings, which were constructed from past knowledge, feelings, beliefs, attitudes and values; and then indicated from each particular interaction, how new meanings and memories seemed to result. Kavanagh (1996), explains:

In the meeting of the visitor with the museum, there is a potentially powerful, rich, dynamic opportunity to bring together individual experiences with a (sometimes) predictable assemblage of material and ideas ... perhaps the promise of this serendipitous moment explains, at least in part, the continuing appeal of museums and the fascination they hold for visitors and many history curators alike. In this view, the museum becomes a site for explorations and discoveries, whether it be about oneself or some aspect of the past to which a personal connection might be made ... Each visitor according to their own lives and priorities will select or reject, engage and disconnect from the histories on offer. What is 'true' for one, cannot and will not be 'true' for all ... The self, as much as the 'professional', is brought to this and cannot be set aside. We are what we create and what we create, in good part, constitutes ourselves, and sometimes our souls (Kavanagh,1996:2,3).

Citing the work of Sheldon Annis (1994), Kavanagh suggests that museums provide opportunities for visitors to engage with collections within three different spaces, namely: the cognitive space; the pragmatic/social space; and the dream space. In the cognitive space the collection provides a wealth of

material evidence which when interpreted may resonate with remembered information held by the visitor. In the pragmatic/social space, the act of visiting in a public arena reinforces 'the social bonds that see us through life ... promoted through the sharing of the experience ... and in particular through the exchange of personal and collective memories'. And in the dream space, whereby the images, colours and textures of the collection incite memories which can be as random as bits of conversations, songs or images long forgotten (1996:3-4). She concludes:

When we walk through or around museums we weave both our bodies and our minds through these spaces. Slipping in and out of the museum's structures, we access a whole range of thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, this is a deep and moving experience, often it is at surface level only. But the fact that this experience can be so profound, makes the role of the museum in opening up histories and prompting memories all the more significant (Kavanagh, 1996:4).

However, Kavanagh (1996), reminds us that while our memories are crucial for helping us shape our sense of identity, they are, nevertheless, personal constructions capable of being both flawed and subject to reinterpretation²⁴. Moreover, what we choose to remember or forget, alters our relationship with the past as our own personal history (1996:8-9). Knowledge of how memories contribute to the formation of personal meaning is therefore crucial for curators and historians - making those significant links between artefacts and people, demands research into human experience and understanding, which this study shows²⁵.

From the perspective of the British Museum, John Mack (2003), like Kavanagh(1996), discusses how objects and collections can directly shape our identity both personally and collectively. How we situate ourselves in relation to cultural artefacts in that theatre of memory we call the museum, directly affects the way in which we construct our notions of self-understanding. Neil MacGregor says:

For individuals as for communities, it may be said that memory is identity. At the very least it is an essential part of it. To lose your memory is, quite literally, no longer to know *who* you are ... understanding what occurs across and between cultures is fundamental to reassessing and more completely understanding *what* we are (MacGregor, in Mack,2003:8-9).

However, MacGregor asks, though objects may point to our common human existence, because memory is dynamic and constructed, how do we know that we

are comparing like with like? In the process of addressing this issue, Mack(2003), tells us, 'what comes across different cultures is not the details of cultural forms as such, but what underlies them ... the theme of memory, [is] a characteristic which is integral to the definition of all cultures as of individuals (2003:19). Memories, as Mack reminds us, give us a point of departure, a place to connect what has gone before with what comes now and in the future. Remembering through memorials, memorabilia, mnemonics, memoranda, memoirs or even aide-mémoires therefore are ways in which people across time and cultures attempt to anchor or position themselves socially and temporally (Mack, 2003:27).

When the children considered the mummy case in the museum, decorated with hieroglyphs which told the life story of Amenhotep, the masterbuilder; or contemplated the individually sculpted mummy masks, their understanding of who these ancient Egyptians were, what their lives were like, how they died, how they were prepared for mummification, or even remembered by their friends and family, would be constructed from the way in which the objects resonated with their personal memories or pre-understandings. When we position or understand ourselves historically through the use of objects as evidence, we do so not just by drawing on our memories but by calling upon our imagination too.

When discussing the role of the imagination in making history, Lee (1984), is clear; he says, 'If imagination is one criterion of understanding history, then a lack of imagination is likely to be symptomatic of lack of understanding. And lack of understanding renders history pointless' (Lee, in Dickinson, Lee and Rogers,1984:111). This notwithstanding, how does the imagination relate to evidence? If objects become evidence when questions are asked, and there are no rules for deciding the type of questions which may be asked, then there is scope²⁶ for using evidence with imagination to create understanding or interpretation.

To demonstrate how the imagination can influence the interpretation of evidence, Lee(1984), cites Furlong's (1961), analysis of: *in* imagination;

supposal; and with imagination. In relation to my study, when a child claimed she was ‘*in* an Egyptian treasury’, she felt imaginatively transported to ancient Egypt surrounded by highly valued objects. When a boy claimed, ‘if I were the pharaoh’s son in Egypt’, he was imagining/*supposing* what it would be like to be an ancient Egyptian prince. And when he went on to say, ‘I felt that if I had actually met the pharaoh that I would almost feel as if he was staring me right in the eye once again’, he was imaginatively *with* that pharaoh - the story was continued - it had gone beyond²⁷. From these examples alone, we can see that the children had been taken on various flights of fancy; in terms of making history, this gave them a springboard from which to ask questions about the objects as historical evidence. But, as Lee reminds us:

Evidence does not oblige us to believe anything by itself, but only in conjunction with a conception of the world and how it works. But this conception includes (at least) a concept of a past without which there could be no evidence, and perhaps also more substantive conceptions of what any part of the past could be like. These conceptions provide (at least) *prima facie* limits on what we can imagine (Lee, in Dickinson, Lee and Rogers, 1984:87).

While this section has focused on the ways in which the children experienced the wonder and amazement of ‘real’ objects, it has demonstrated not only how this phenomenon initiated an embodied curiosity and a motivation to learn, but also shown how primary practice can help children reflect on their own emotional and cognitive responses throughout the learning process.

3.3.2 Feeling Connections - Holding Hands across Time - Empathy:

The children’s spontaneous curiosity and enthusiasm for the objects frequently occurred during their experience of handling. Those encounters, which were often significant and compelling, helped the children *feel* connected to the ancient Egyptians and to one another, and regularly elicited empathic and empathetic responses. This leads me to suggest that teachers of primary school children should be aware that when children say, ‘I felt I wanted to get in there and try and feel it’; or, ‘It didn’t feel like or look like it was a mask’; or, ‘You can always feel that they’re really, really old’; they are expressing an instinctive desire to actively explore their world. Currently, though not every child will have the opportunity of touching ‘real’ ancient objects, there is an increasing number of museums who are beginning to operate with handling and loan

How then, did the children feel 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians through their empathic or intuitive responses? When some of the children handled the objects they said they felt 'ancientness' - that is to say a quality which communicated very considerable age; they also said they felt ancient themselves; or described feeling 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptian who had made or used the object they were touching. This empathic understanding drew its strength from the imagination and a type of resonance or memory - all of a sudden they were connected.

However, when some of the children touched the kitten's death mask or observed the mummified animals they empathized with the ancient Egyptians, by variously expressing a sense of compassion, admiration, responsibility and privilege. To explore the relationship between memory and imagination as empathic and empathetic responses²⁹, I want to return to Lee's (1984), text. Discussing empathy as a power, achievement or a process, he asserts:

If imagination has associations with the merely fictitious, empathy is associated with fellow-feeling, shared emotions, and even identification with some other person ... empathy is sometimes conceived of as a *power* ... this is not an indication that mysterious powers are at work, but that we share a common form of life at a very basic level with all other humans, and at the cultural level with those in our own society. We pick up signs as to what people mean and want without conscious ratiocination, and although we can make mistakes, or be fooled, we often get it right. But in history we are not in direct contact with the people we study, and do not enjoy mutual relationships with them; in consequence empathy as a power has no role in history. In fact empathy in history is much more like an *achievement*, it is knowing what someone (or some group) believed, valued, felt and sought to attain. It is being in a position to entertain (not necessarily to share) these beliefs, and being in a position to consider the impact of these emotions (not necessarily to feel them). In this way empathy is closely related to understanding ... Empathy may also be regarded as a *process* ... in history we find out what someone believed or wanted by looking at the evidence, and we justify our assertions by referring to that evidence ... in history this amounts to the disposition to take into account other points of view (Lee, in Dickinson, Lee and Rogers, 1984:89-90).

There are a number of points here. When the children expressed a sense of ancientness and a closeness to the ancient Egyptians, who they imagined had personally used the objects, they seem to have experienced a form of intuition or empathic *power* - derived from 'sharing a common form of life at a very basic level with all other humans'. Furthermore, when they expressed

compassion, admiration, responsibility and privilege it seems they were not only still empathizing on that very basic level, but also empathizing in terms of *achievement* and *historical process*.

Though many children expressed these empathetic responses, not every child did so. This suggests that some children have the capacity to see things from different perspectives, which ultimately implies that they are able to imagine what the beliefs, attitudes, values and feelings of other people might be, and differentiate them from their own³⁰. Lee (1984), discusses this issue and draws on the work of Flavell (1980), and Donaldson (1978), he comments:

Being asked to see things from another's point of view must be embodied in a meaningful task, but it also involves understanding what sense can be made of what others do, and their purposes, intentions and perspectives within the task ... Flavell has suggested that children are often capable of making inferences that allow them to put themselves in someone else's position, but do not necessarily see the need to make such inferences ... Experimenters are increasingly aware of the need to see how things look from a child's point of view. Margaret Donaldson has stressed for all thinking, the task must make 'human sense', and has distinguished between 'embedded' and 'disembedded' thinking (Lee,1984:108).

When children empathize with others through objects they need to make a meaningful/sensible connection with what the object is, and how the object functioned within a social/cultural context. In *History in the Early Years*, Hilary Cooper (1995), maintains, 'Thinking historically constantly involves the questions, "What is it like to be someone else?" and "How do I know that it is true?" ' (1995:3). Nichol and Fines (1997), agree that empathy can be a historical and imaginative device for stepping into the shoes of the people of the past and trying to understand what they were thinking and feeling(1997:21).

When O'Hara and O'Hara (2000), discuss empathy they draw on the work of Little (1989). They report:

The third aspect of the imagination, empathy, introduces the idea that feelings as well as thought can impel behaviour. Teachers need to remember that empathy is not the same as sympathy. The former involves understanding, while the latter is about agreement ... The notion of empathy is open to criticism from those who regard the purpose of history to tell the true story of the past. It is certainly the case that caution needs to be exercised when putting oneself into someone else's shoes. It is never possible to truly understand in this way and the further back in time one journeys, the more difficult the task will be. That said there is no shortage of evidence of the power of emotions to motivate behaviour and learning (Hyson,1994). Memory and learning can be enhanced in creative and imaginative approaches to history that heighten children's interest and enjoyment and can offer them opportunities to experiment with and try out

In Chapter 3, I cited Husbands and Pendry's (2000), argument that, 'these worlds are different from the personal and emotional worlds of the past *both* because people in the past thought differently from us, and also because the pupils are children asked to get to grips with the mind-set of adults' (2000:129). Notwithstanding, Lee's (1984) point about the power of empathy would seem to counter this claim.

From the discussion above I have demonstrated how children's memories, imagination and empathic/empathetic responses to the objects contributed to their personal interpretations of ancient Egyptian culture. By listening to their statements and observing their gestures it has been possible to move towards an understanding of how their attitudes, beliefs and values contribute to their thoughts and feelings; and moreover, to discover how individually constructed their views of the world are. Moreover, this demonstrates not merely how history depends on the way in which the wonder of the enigmatic object sets in train the interaction of the memory, imagination and the emotions; but explains why understanding and interpreting objects is personally constructed.

Pedagogy, as van Manen (1991) and Bollnow(1989), define it, is being in a caring relationship with children. Because my research sought to understand one particular lived experience of primary school children, I have tried to show how the insight gained has relevance for those functions of pedagogic practice. Reflecting on the lived experience of children ultimately helps teachers re-visit taken-for-granted maxims, and re-evaluate their own professional methods as they re-cognize the child. It is this new vision, forged from mutual understanding, that will benefit both teacher and child. I now focus on the aspects of this understanding which I believe make an original contribution to knowledge.

4. THE ORIGINAL ASPECTS OF THIS RESEARCH:

One of the explanations of the word 'original' used as an adjective, in the New Oxford Dictionary of English, is something which is, 'created directly and personally by a particular artist: not an imitation' (Pearsall and

Hanks,2001:1309). I want to use this phrase, 'created directly and personally', to draw out the original aspects of this research.

In Chapter 4, I described the basic tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology, and explained how this method is practised. This involved: turning to the nature of lived experience; orienting to the phenomenon; investigating the experience; analyzing and interpreting the experience; bracketing personal prejudices, and reflecting, writing and rewriting about it, as a means of understanding its meanings. However, I also said that this method was creative, and therefore the way in which each part of that procedure was interpreted would always be particular. For, just as everyone is unique, so everyone's lived experience and their understanding of that experience will be unique. In consequence, as I adapted the format of hermeneutic phenomenology to the children's experience I created my own personal style of investigation. Certainly the fundamental procedures were not original, but the way in which I adapted the method was creative.

However, the strongest element of originality in this research is the topic itself: namely, presenting an understanding of the experiential meanings of primary school children's encounters of ancient Egyptian objects. In this study though I was involved in the experience as a teacher, researcher and museum employee, I did not set out to collect data to prove a hypothesis, undertake a case study, or improve teaching methods; I merely wanted to move towards an understanding of that lived experience.

To this end the common themes which I identified and interpreted both separately and holistically provided me with new insights into the children's worlds, and helped me reconsider my own. By listening to the children and observing their gestures as embodied reactions, I began to appreciate that these particular objects were no ordinary objects. They were extraordinary - sensuous, mysterious, amazing, frightening and yet exciting. To be aware of what it felt like to be moved back in time or feel 'in touch' with the ancient Egyptians in an imaginative way, or even horrified by the sight of a mummified hand, allowed me to glimpse the depth of human commonalities. I could identify

with these feelings, I, like them could feel moved by a 'real' ancient doll, stand in awe³¹ in the presence of that mummy case, and feel a sense of fascination for their hieroglyphic texts. Certainly, like Mitoraj, I had resonated with that, 'magnetic force released by this ancient civilisation'; and, by studying the children reactions as they encountered the objects, I had begun to approach the far off shores of human experience.

This procedure of tapping into human experience through the emotions, has provided the key to unlock that sense of interconnectedness; which, as Lee (1984), describes, is a common form of life shared at a very basic level with all human beings (1984:89). As a researcher/teacher, I became in touch not merely with the ancient Egyptians in an imaginary way, but in a more direct, personal and embodied way with the children and humankind by creating my own pathway to human understanding.

The ancient Egyptians held a belief in an after-life and initiated rituals and practices to ensure it was achieved. In consequence, their culture and daily life was conditioned by their view of life and death. It is not surprising therefore, in a culture which is saturated with funerary objects, that thoughts and feelings about life and death should predominate. I contend that, because nothing is more fundamental to human beings than life and death, objects which resonate with notions of survival will always be of the utmost personal significance. And, just as the children felt a sense of fear and excitement for the objects, so they will remain a captivating and intriguing resource. When we are drawn to consider our destiny whether it is through the culturally and historically distinctive images of an ancient funerary object or a modern battle scene in the media, we do so through the frame of our culturally and historically constructed common humanity³². It is this, I suggest, which not only enables us to feel (often imaginatively) for connections and interconnectedness across time and space, but allows us to experience a shared embodied understanding. In consequence, throughout this particular research, I have begun to move towards a greater understanding of human being through the eyes of the child.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH METHODS:

Education, as a life-long process of positive cognitive, emotional, social and moral development, has long been a fixed item on the government's agenda³³. For primary pedagogy, this effectively means protecting, directing and orienting the child - leading it out of childhood and beckoning it into the adult world. If these are broadly the aims and ideas which underpin educational practice, educational research is that discipline which questions them.

In this section I want to take both a reflective and reflexive position and ask how hermeneutic phenomenology contributes to an understanding of educational research methods. Heidegger (1973), originally inspired by his teacher Husserl, spent his life trying to 'go back to basics'. In other words, his project was inquiring into *Dasein* or there-being - that state which precedes all other states. And apart from explaining that being is *time*; that being is *being-with* as part of the *fourfold* (earth, sky, divinities and mortals); he also said that being, by its very nature, is *understanding*. Understanding therefore, as Gadamer (1975), would later explicate, has everything to do with being personally constructed in time, within the traditions which form our personal world. Thus when we point to what we experience as reality, our interpretation or pointing out of this reality is totally unique.

Merleau-Ponty (1962), claimed that as the body is woven into the structure of the world, our primary perception is pre-conscious, and felt through the body as the 'real'. In the moment when we become conscious or aware we take a perspective on life - on our body, on time, on space and others - on the world - and this is what we know as reality. If trying to access this pre-conscious or pre-reflective state of being through experience is phenomenology's fundamental project, hermeneutics sets itself the task of understanding and interpreting the experiential meanings of this experience by focusing on the language of gesture, silence and speech.

It is this 'turning to the things themselves' which underpins this hermeneutic phenomenological method, and as such urges the research student to ponder with persistence and rigour, his/her own being and the being of others as a

shared phenomenon. This means reflecting on the etymological, idiomatic and epiphanic character of language, drawing on accounts of lived experience, and on fiction and poetry too, because language, which is saturated with embodied meanings, will ultimately reveal its secrets by resonating with the student. Furthermore, by focusing on the lived existentials of 'lived-time', 'lived-space', 'lived-body' and 'lived-human relations', it urges the student to consider how all these factors of human existence interconnect.

However, because hermeneutic phenomenology gives the student the insight of understanding that human existence is skewed to one particular viewpoint, it suggests that the student focuses the spotlight on him/herself, to become aware of the biases or prejudices which contribute to their particular point of view; arguing that, while no purely objective position is possible, a more balanced understanding can be achieved if one's own position is evident. Moreover, this balanced understanding sees itself as connected, fused with the world, and therefore legitimate.

At the writing stage of this research, hermeneutic phenomenology demands more than a mere reporting back. It doesn't just want to know what happened. Rather it requires the student to search again and again for the words and phrases which reverberate with their own human being asking - how did it really feel? What was it really like? Throughout this searching and researching, listening and listening again, it takes nothing for granted.

One fundamental facet of hermeneutic phenomenological research which can never be taken-for-granted however, is the acknowledgement that, like all research methods and all historical interpretations, it is culturally and historically constructed and therefore must be considered partial, negotiated and subject to revision. Consequently, this is why I have titled this study, *Towards Understanding the Experiential Meanings of Primary School Children's Encounters with Ancient Egyptian Objects*. Understanding, I believe, is never complete - like research and the perpetual question, it always tries to approach enlightenment and seeks a 'going beyond'.

6. TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Throughout this research there have been numerous aspects of the children's experience which have fascinated me. I have been intrigued by the power of the emotions; the way in which we are embedded in our emotions; and curious about how this embeddedness draws on our imagination and our memories in our search for understanding and learning. I would therefore like to continue to investigate the relationship between memory, imagination, the emotions and identity.

Furthermore, I have begun to appreciate that though we share commonalities with the children we teach, their worlds are not just different from our own but vibrantly different. Observing how they responded with wonder, amazement, empathy and fear in this study, has made me curious not only about how their reactions to artefacts from ancient Egypt and other civilizations might differ, but also what different facets of human being might be revealed from this endeavour.

One significant, though not universal, feature of the children's encounter was their contrasting and alternate feelings of fear and excitement; described as the sublime by both Edmund Burke (1757/1958), in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*; and by Immanuel Kant (1764), in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*; and as 'abjection' by Julia Kristeva (1982). For Burke, the sublime was, 'capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror; a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror' (1958:136). For Kant, 'the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a sense of limitlessness yet with a super-added thought of its totality' (1973:90). For Kristeva the abject is, 'what does not respect borders, positions, rules. The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite' (1982:4). As Nead (1992), comments, 'For Kristeva, the most significant border is that between the subject and the object, the distinction between the inside and the outside of the body. Subjectivity is organized around an awareness of this distinction and the sense of the body as a unified whole, defining the form and limits or corporeal identity' (1992:32). I am interested in the way in which fear and excitement

interact and how the oscillations of these emotions can energize and harness the power of curiosity to approach, and subsequently negotiate, the borders of the unknown.

7. AFTERWORD:

This chapter has shown how a study of primary school children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects in a museum context can contribute to a wider knowledge of primary pedagogy, primary history and museum education. Initially, whilst this research was curious about whether children might find these objects captivating and inspiring like so many other generations, it was the *children's experience itself* which became the most compelling phenomenon. Using hermeneutic phenomenology as its method, this research subsequently discovered that children's experiences of ancient Egyptian objects in a museum setting, is a *complex* phenomenon. Accordingly, it has problematized an understanding of children, raised issues about viewing and touching artefacts in museums, and considered the meanings of this encounter as an area of profound fecundity, capable of stimulating many more interesting questions. Although, it has focused on only one encounter, the findings of this research have shown that as a human encounter it has moved understanding closer towards 'the far off shores of human experience', and seen that education lies at its heart.

Notes:

1. Anecdotal evidence from the manager of the book shop in the British Museum reveals that the Egyptian Galleries of the British Museum not only receive the greatest number of visitors each year, but 20% of the British Museum's merchandising revenue comes from gifts and book sales which take ancient Egypt/Egyptians as their theme. He argues that the vibrant colour of ancient Egyptian artefacts stimulate the senses; the comic-strip type imagery/iconography and hieroglyphs intrigue and fascinate; and the mythology which surrounds this ancient civilization, so redolent of stories of life and death and good and evil, acts as a modern equivalent of the 'fairy tale'.

2. In *Understanding Pedagogy and its Impact on Learning*, 1999, edited by Peter Mortimore, Caroline Gipps and Barbara MacGilchrist's article entitled, 'Primary School Learners', and, Iram Siraj-Blatchford's paper entitled, 'Early Childhood Pedagogy: Practice, Principles and Research', document recent pedagogical research.

3. Empathic and empathetic responses to ancient Egyptian objects played a considerable part in the children's experience as evidenced in Chapters 5 and 6, and discussed above on pp.249; 296.

4. In Chapter 3 p.132, I referred to Hexter's (1972), idea of creating history by processing historical sources from 'first' and 'second' records cited in, *Teaching Primary History* by Nichol and Fines (1997). When children understand how they draw upon their own values,

knowledge, experience and judgments when they interpret historical evidence, it is easier for them to appreciate how the writing of history can never be value free.

I have also discussed Gadamer's (1975:271-273) theory of the 'fusion of horizons', which explains how interactions with objects can lead to understanding. See Chapters 1, 4 and 6.

5. In an essay entitled, 'How does the child experience the world of things?' the phenomenologist Langeveld describes the way children enter into the human world of objects and history. He said:

The things in the world of the child don't just show their own age, they make reference to the lives and the worlds of other people who are no longer with us or who are not yet with us... the child cannot help but learn through the encounter with things the various dimensions of human sense-making (for example, cooperation, the earlier times, our belongings from an ancient past, the continuity of then and now). Behind the things there is always a person, and he peers through them as it were (Langeveld,1984: 221-222).

6. The phrases, 'really like' and 'really felt like' have been used regularly throughout this study. See Chapter 4, Note 9.

7. In Chapter 6, I discussed three aspects of Heidegger's (1973), text, *Being and Time* which have relevance for this notion of gaining identity through contexts. These are: *Dasein*, or there-being, as a state of being *with*; *thingliness* and *nearness* in relation to objects; and the *fourfold*, in terms of interconnectedness.

8. In his text, *Researching Lived Experience - Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, van Manen (1990), explains how phenomenology can help us to reflect upon those aspects of lived experience which we so often take for granted. He explains:

The lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research. To make a study of the lived experience of parenting or teaching, one needs to orient oneself in a strong way to the question of the meaning of parenting or teaching. Nothing about the notion of pedagogy (parenting or teaching) should be considered 'given' or 'granted'... and so we need to search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material that, upon reflective examination, might yield something of its fundamental nature (van Manen,1990:53).

In consequence, in terms of this study, it is important *not* to take the museum context for granted: as Chapters 5 and 6 reveal - it was fundamental to the children's experience.

9. In *Separation and Anxiety*, volume two of *Attachment and Loss*, John Bowlby (1975), writes about the importance of family and familiarity for the young child. He tells us that familiarity of the environment embraces the child's relationship to the space occupied by the other family members and their communal possessions. This explains why strangers and new environments can be experienced with suspicion (1975:127,320).

10. Chris Watkins and Peter Mortimore (1999), attest to the fact that the complex 'activity system', created by the interaction of teachers and children within the classroom, not only provides the teaching context but can be very influential for the style and outcomes of pedagogy (1999:4-6). This point has resonance with Falk and Dierking's (1992), theory of the social context of museums; see Chapter 3.

11. When children use the adjectives 'mysterious', 'strange' or 'weird' to describe ancient Egyptian objects, they may be referring to one of several notions. First, the fact that the objects are ancient conjures up not merely feelings of great age, but an inaccessibility in terms of time. Thus, because the ancient Egyptians lived thousands of years ago can suggest that they are shrouded in the mists of time (See Chapters 5 and 6 for the children's notions of ancientness). Second, because their culture and beliefs were different from our own, (especially their religious belief in the afterlife and their funerary customs), and because a

great many of their surviving artefacts are funerary in nature, there seems to be a clear link with death - itself a mysterious, or at least an unknown phenomenon. Third, due to the fact that the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs are a dead language (originally written from the end of the fourth millennium BC and used for over 3,000 years) they represent a mysterious pictorial code (Davies,1987:6).

Although hieroglyphs were seen on ancient Egyptian pottery, papyri, sculpture and architecture, it wasn't until 1822 when the Rosetta Stone was deciphered that a breakthrough was made in translating and interpreting these texts (James,1979:84). One example of hieroglyphic script which demonstrates how the language and its use are tied up with mystery, is the collection of 189 papyri which were spells and hymns later known as the *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Faulkner and Andrews,1996:7-23). A number of these would be copied by scribes, recited at the burial of a deceased person, and placed alongside the body. These texts, some of which were decorated with vignettes, invoked the magical and mysterious power of the gods to protect the deceased in the afterlife. Clearly death, and the domain which the deceased would inhabit in the afterlife, was beset with dangers. From this evidence it would seem that the ancient Egyptians' fear of death owed a great deal to its mystery. Therefore, the connection of the ancient Egyptians and mystery has a documented history.

In Chapter 3, I cited D'Auria, Lacovara and Roehrig, who stated that, 'Many misconceptions have arisen about ancient Egypt and its funerary practices. These have been fuelled by the media's creation of the "mummy's curse," by innumerable horror movies, and by wild imagination' (1988:11). Since the inclusion of the Ancient Egyptians as a topic of the National Curriculum history syllabus (See Chapter 3), books, newspapers, magazines, films and CD Roms have proliferated, and as a result children and adults have been exposed to the mystery of this culture. This would suggest that when children experience ancient Egyptian objects in a museum they may do so with a degree of 'false consciousness' which might be characterized in terms of mystery.

12. In contrast, it would be interesting to discover how children's experiences of ancient Greek objects differed from their experience of ancient Egyptian artefacts. One could speculate that, because these artefacts tend to be very decorative and colourful (especially the blue ceramic and intricately patterned mummy cases, masks and coffins), perhaps they are more appealing to the senses. And furthermore, because so many surviving ancient Egyptian artefacts are of a funerary nature, an experience of this particular culture could be more emotive.

13. The concept of conscious memory, which is always personally unique, has two major symbiotic facets: namely, the ability to recall; and a bank of *significant* sense experiences which can range from feelings - smells, sounds, noises, sights and textures, to combinations of feelings which, as consistent *significant* wholes, can be episodes, places, things - objects or facts/ideas/procedures, or people. While we cannot identify what we know without drawing on our memory in linguistic terms, it is useful to think of the Latin definition of memory as *memor* meaning 'mindful' (Pearsall and Hanks,2001:1155). Because museums display objects from the past they can be thought of as memory banks which can trigger personal resonances from the past. In this study I want to embrace the notion of memory as a way of knowing pregnant for reinterpretation.

14. See Chapter 2 for a theoretical discussion of the role of the imagination; and Chapters 5 and 6 for the way in which the children's imagination was crucial for many of their interpretations of the ancient Egyptian objects. Citing Trevelyan, the well-known historian, Cooper (1995), tells us: 'Selecting, piecing together and interpreting evidence in order to construct an account of the past requires imagination. Trevelyan (1919), said that at bottom the appeal of history is imaginative; truth is the criterion of historical study but its impelling motive is poetic' (Cooper,1995:17).

15. Children's understanding and feelings about death have been discussed in Chapter 6. The following quotations reinforce the depth of their fears: they said:

And I saw a dead hand - a sort of black hand. It made me feel sick.

It freaked me out but it made me feel ill because seeing a mummified cat and falcon and hand and things like that, it was really scary so it made me feel ill.

Then I went into the second part; I came to find myself staring at a mummified kitten, falcon and human hand. Then a shiver ran down my back. It really scared me.

It felt like if you, it felt like if my body is still like that in about six thousand years, I don't want to be all black.

16. See Chapter 6 for van Manen's (1991:57), explanation of risk and safety. While this was a significant aspect of some of the children's experiences with the objects, it begs the question whether it should be explored in reference not only to children's approaches to new experiences, but more particularly whether teachers can learn from studying the potential of this type of experience for learning. Numerous writers have documented this phenomenon which speaks of the extremes of experience with art and nature; they range from 18th. century ideas of the 'sublime' by Edmund Burke(1768/1958), and Immanuel Kant (1790/1973); to more recent texts by Jon Thompson entitled, 'The Sublime Moment - The Rise of the Critical Watchman' (1999); Christopher Kool-Want's, 'The Sublime Now' (1999); and Julia Kristeva's, *Powers of Horror : An Essay on Abjection* (1982). See also p.288 above.

17. The notion of 'aura', as 'a distinctive atmosphere or quality that seems to be generated by a person, thing or place - originally via Latin and Greek, "breeze, breath" ' (Pearsall and Hanks,2001:111), has not been explored by using this word, but rather in terms of the 'atmosphere' of the museum context, whereby the children were imaginatively transported to ancient Egypt or ancient time; or in terms of empathic responses whereby the children felt or intuited an imaginary sense of ancientness and/or deathliness which emanated from certain objects.

18. See Chapter 5 p. 243 for reference to the blue ceramic:
'This little blue cup. It's a flower I think, and it's very pretty. I mostly like the turquoise colour because it's my favourite colour'.

See Chapter 5 p 243 for reference to two tiny scarab amulets:
'Really, these two scarabs are nearly the same size as a mouse. I've been looking at them for a long time. When I see something like this I like to go up and have a good look. I can see the tiny details in the wings'.

See Chapter 5 p.234 for reference to the intricacy of detail on the mummy case:
'Wow, it's so cool - I've never seen these things before - it's astonishing to see a real mummy case - it's just so amazing ... when I looked more closely I was surprised to see how detailed it was. I expected it to have some detail but not that much'.

See Chapter 5 p.255 for reference to the texture of the bronze mummy mask of a kitten:
'It's hard to realize that that's what it is. It doesn't feel like or look like it was a mask. Yeah, the mask - I thought it would be a little bit soft from the way that our skin is soft and everything, and a cat's skin is soft'.

19. Raney (1997), lists six significant characteristics of digital media:
(i) Digital rather than analogue: Digital information comes in units which means when copies are made they are indistinguishable from one another.
(ii) Malleability: Digital information can be moved and changed and transformed, but only in accordance with the software - thus there is a limit to the scope of creativity.
(iii) Multimodality: computers can produce images, words and sounds simultaneously and change words into sounds.
(iv) Indirectness: digital information and the conditions for changing it are located in the software and therefore inaccessible to the human senses.
(v) Interactivity: there is great potential for the manipulation of images.

(vi) Non-linearity: information can be accessed via different routes and different sequences.

It is, Raney (1997), asserts, this malleability and indirectness whereby images are constructed automatically which has a tendency to contribute to a feeling of disembodiment (1997:61).

20. In their edited text, *The Virtual and The Real: Media in the Museum*, Thomas and Mintz (1998), discuss the issues which all museums need to address when they include different forms of media in their displays. They write, 'The use of media compels museums and the professional who work in them to re-evaluate the complex relationships among object, venue and audience, and perhaps to redefine approaches to education and interpretation' (1998:Frontispiece).

21. For an explanation of Heidegger's reference to 'the essence of truth', see Chapter 2, Notes 16 and 17.

22. In Chapters 5 and 6, I discussed how the children's curiosity was aroused through experiencing the wonder of 'real' objects, and how this initiated questioning and a motivation to learn. Csikszentmihayli and Hermanson (1995) discuss, *Intrinsic Motivation in Museums. What Makes Visitors Want to Learn?* They reveal that:

The natural motivation to learn can be rekindled by supportive environments, meaningful activities, by being freed of anxiety, fear, and other negative mental states, and when the task meets the person's skills ... learning involves the whole person, not only the intellectual, but the sensory and the emotional faculties as well (Csikszentmihayli and Hermanson, 1995:35).

Expanding on these ideas they say that while spontaneous curiosity can initially engender interest in an exhibit, it needs to be sustained for learning to result. Furthermore, no one will learn unless they can find a connection with their previous learning/experience either in terms of difference or similarities. Citing previous work on the 'flow experience' (1990), they say that learning is most effective when there is a balance between the skills of the learner, the challenges which they are presented with, and the rewards which follow. This puts the onus on museums to help people make meaningful connections which involve a holistic engagement with exhibits and people, rather than emphasizing the intellectual aspects of a museum experience. Setting goals and targets, asking questions which can be attempted at various levels can therefore be good catalysts for stimulating curiosity (Csikszentmihayli and Hermanson, 1995: 34-37;59-61).

In 'Connecting with Students' Intrinsic Motivation', Jere Brophy (1998), reveals that the concept of intrinsic motivation resulted from need theories, which are based on the assumption that when a need arises people automatically act to satisfy that need and learn in the process. Citing Ryan, Connell and Grolnick (1992), intrinsic motivation is explained in terms of development. They assert:

An alternative perspective, more complex and subtle ... considers the motivation to learn to be a developmental issue. While learning can be wholly controlled and prompted from outside (i.e. externally regulated), the goal of education is, from the alternative view, the development of self-regulation for learning. This conceptualizes as a movement away from heteronomy and toward autonomy in the acquisition of knowledge, away from reliance on others for the incentives to learn and toward internal satisfaction with accomplishment and the learning process itself (Ryan, Connell and Grolnick, in Brophy,1998:126).

This approach is consistent with *constructivist* theory whereby the child takes responsibility for its own learning. See Chapter 3, for a discussion of *constructivism*.

23. Reading Museum operates a thriving loan system throughout Berkshire. For information

Nichol and Fines (1997), recommend that children and teachers supply objects which have historical significance by bringing antiques from home. They say:

But you don't need wondrous material for what you are going to do, nice as it is to have. Very ordinary objects from the past can yield wondrous results with children - a Victorian coin, an old school ink bottle, a button. Any junk shop will provide you with a small museum of bits and pieces for a tiny investment ... another way of collecting artefacts, especially from the recent past, is to ask parents to loan objects for school use (Nichol and Fines, 1997:146-147).

While it cannot be guaranteed that ancient Egyptian objects will be forthcoming from the children's homes, it is often surprising what people own and may be prepared to lend.

24. Memory which supplies the lifeblood of the imagination, like knowledge is never 'pure' but always culturally and historically constructed.

25. Two further articles which stress the importance of memory, the imagination, the senses and the emotions for making museum experiences meaningful are: Hooley McLaughlin's (2000), 'The Pursuit of Memory: Museums and the Denial of the Fulfilling Sensory Experience'; and, Danielle Rice's (2000), 'Constructing Informed Practice'. However, though it might be assumed that all memories are aids to desirable museum experiences, Gavriel Rosenfeld's (2000), text, *Munich and Memory - Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich*, puts an opposing view. Due to differing and contested memories of Germany before and during the Second World War, the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* - coming to terms with or mastering the past, demonstrates that, 'memory is collective but not monolithic; it is a focal point of multiple, socially constructed views of the past held independently by various groups within society' (Rosenfeld, 2000:1). Differing attitudes to memory can present a dilemma: for, while some Germans wanted to forget the past because of its associations with the heinous crimes of the Nazis, they discovered that forgetting or wiping out their memories was a difficult procedure, The more they wished to forget the more they remembered. Furthermore, not to remember could be interpreted as complicit guilt (Rosenfeld, 2000:2).

26. See Chapter 2, p. 59 for Sartre's explanation of the the imagination as, 'the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom'.

27. See Chapter 2, p. 58 for Warnock's discussion of the imagination in terms of going beyond.

28. The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford operates handling sessions for children as part of its educational programme. See Note 23 above for a reference to Reading Museum's loan system for schools.

29. In Chapter 2, I referred to Warnock's (1976), discussion of the imagination. While she advocated that it fulfilled an intermediary function between sensation and perception, she also stressed that it was both cognitively and emotionally charged. She said: 'Its impetus comes from the emotions as much as from the reason, from the heart as much as from the head' (1976:196). When the children responded to the objects in an empathic and empathetic way they were using both the cognitive and emotional facets of their imagination.

30. In *Oleander, Jacaranda* (1995), Penelope Lively describes an incident from her Egyptian childhood. On entering a mud hut owned by some local Arabs for the first time, she realized the world could be seen from a different point of view. She writes:

I think that by then I was about nine. I find the episode intriguing because I can recover my own feelings of bewilderment and disorientation, and because I can now see objectively that it seems to be an instance of a child becoming aware of the existence of other viewpoints - an erosion of the

egocentric vision of childhood. And the whole thing is complicated by the further dimension of cultural assumptions. I saw that peasant family with a new clarity, both stepping aside from my own customary viewpoint and shedding for an instant the obscuring wisdoms of the adults I knew: Lucy, my parents, their friends. I saw that there is more than one way of looking at the world, and was startled ... the mercurial quality of the actual process - the extraordinary way in which children learn to negotiate the jungle in which they find themselves, and the parallel achievement whereby they discover that theirs is not the only negotiation - that experience is universal, and that it is expedient to discover how others experience (Lively,1990:14-15).

31. The notion of experiencing awe in terms of contrasting feelings of reverence/respect and horror and terror, is very similar to that described as the sublime and abject.

32. Though it might be assumed that thoughts of death are always characterized by fear and dread, I am not convinced that this is the case. Within specific cultures understanding of death might tend to follow a pattern of stereotypical responses, but this may not always pertain.

33. See the D.E.E. document, *Creating learning cultures: next steps in achieving the learning age: second report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning* (1999).

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APPENDIX I

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEWS

The following table gives an overview of the collection of the interview data:

- the school - identified by initial
- the year group of the children
- the date of the interview
- the number of interviews
- number of children who were interviewed on each occasion
- total number of children interviewed

School	Year Group	Interview Date	Interview Nos.	Children Interviewed	Total No./Ch.
A	6	4.7.2000	2	3	6
B	4	9.3.2000	1	4	4
C	3	7.6.2000	1	4	4
D	6	7.3.2000	2	3	6
E	3	10.2.2000	2	3	6
F	4	25.5.2000	2	4	8
G	4	7.6.2000	1	4	4
H	3	9.11.1999	2	6	12
I	3	8.2.2000	1	8	8
J	4	5.7.2000	1	6	6
K	5	16.11.1999	4	3	12
L	3	25.11.1999	1	3	3
M	6	3.7.2000	2	3	6
N	6	14.3.2000	2	3	6
O	3	25.11.1999	3	4	12
P	3	3.7.2000	3	3	9

APPENDIX II

A TRANSCRIPTION OF A VIDEO-TAPED INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTIST, RITA KEEGAN - A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE EXHIBITION, time machine: Ancient Egypt and Contemporary Art, 1994 - 1995

Key

Gestures:

« with one hand: « « with both hands: ~~~ spiralling:

§ smiles:

(L) laughs:

(P) points:

(N) nods:

(OO) Looks around:

(?) a questioning or puzzled look:

(?< >?) reciprocal puzzlement:

(H) head on one side in contemplation:

(\$) shake of the head:

. . . pause:

Emphasis: italics e.g. 'for something as well . . .'

*

R.K.: What am I supposed to talk about? Do you want me to talk about . . . ?

Interviewer: About your work first of all.

R.K.: Ok. The starting point of this piece was the pair statue,

(*Here she points to the pair statue which is part of her installation.*)
and I came to the museum one day . . . I used to come to the British Museum a lot and I was doing some sketching and I came across the pair statue. I felt it bore a striking resemblance to my mother and father. And so when I was talking to James (*the Curator*) and he was talking about this project, I thought that the idea of actually being able to work with this piece that I felt had great personal resonance, I was quite excited about doing that. But also at other times I had been looking at the collection of goddess statues within the whole museum, and the different types of labelling so I was also very interested in looking at different types of imagery. And the concept of living in a society that was polytheistic and not just in terms of a group of male gods or female deities also but what it must have been like to live in a society where you could choose your own deity irrespective of gender. So, if you were a man you could choose a female deity and vice versa. So, I would imagine one would have a completely different mind-set in that society to be eclectic in terms of your worship structure. So that was my starting point with regard to statues.

I used a lot of the photographs from the collection and I colour-enhanced them on the computer and manipulated and played with them. Both pieces were done on MAC (*She points to the computer screen here.*) and the other, my Mummy and Daddy piece, (laughs) I changed this title to Time Machine because the only mummy was my own. And it's basically looking at different types of time: because you have a spiritual time which is the goddess's; you have a personal time which is my family and my own history; and you have real time which

is the black and white monitor, people interacting with the collection which becomes real time. It happens as we speak and also becomes history the moment it has gone through the wire.

In the cabinets I put family artefacts, family photographs, my mother's wedding ring, my father's watch, my grandmother's glasses and my father's army album - he was in the second world war.

(At this point she focuses on the personal artefacts in the glass cases.)

And it was basically to look at the positioning of things in glass cases; how they changed their meaning once they were inside the cabinet, and to look at the issues around in a sense the culture of curating and the culture of history as it becomes curated and it no longer becomes human - the dehumanisation of population. And I was really quite struck when I actually put them in the cabinet how they no longer seemed like mine. How they then became the museum, they then took on the whole characteristic of the place that they were in and it was very bizarre for me to feel that distance from those things that were my own personal history. And that moment when my mother's wedding ring became an artefact, and no longer held my own personal history, my own personal memories. Or almost when the cabinet was closed because you have that separation if only through glass but the whole way museum artefacts are shown they become artefacts they are no longer art they become facts not human. And so I enjoyed that fact but I also hated that fact because it was quite painful.

And in the two CD Roms are materials that are in the video, and I felt that they became new artefacts, and by their little gold cases and little plastic boxes they also become part of the museum exhibit. And that also has no life, that doesn't know that there's two years of my life in those little discs and also if you don't have the technology they become mysterious artefacts. So if for some reason computer software is dug up 2,000 or 4,000 years from now and no computer survives people will look at this and try to decode what a culture is by these shiny discs that aren't jewellery. Did they wear them as earrings? What did they do with them? So it's the same sort of writing history from the culture that you're looking at. And in the other cabinet up here:

(She refers here to the other objects which she extracted from the museum's collection.)

I've used various different artefacts that I felt an affinity to in the permanent collection, and also things I didn't feel you got to see very often. And working with the smaller pieces gave a human quality to the collection because the sculpture gallery is awesome, it's totally awesome because it was made not to look like the artist had made it. It was made for awe inspiring religious purposes and they are incredibly successful at that. You are inspired by their culture, you are inspired by their belief systems, but then you work with the smaller pieces and as an artist I could see the artist's hand in it and to me that was very exciting. So look at that paddle doll which is basically a goddess or a representation of a goddess, possibly fertility, and just look at the little lines; and I knew I could imagine sitting on the banks of the Nile doing a little cottage industry, taking them to the temple and selling them, because people are people. That's the whole thing, because it gave a human quality to the artefacts and you could still see the practitioner's hand in it which for me as an artist made it very exciting. And so it's a combination of the personal and the spiritual in the larger statues like that. To have been able to have gone down and chosen the statues I wanted, and they brought her up and they cleaned her and that was so special for me.

And in this I've used sand and flowers and I had a lot of support from an organisation called QUEST INTERNATIONAL, and they produced this scent and

you can, I think you can smell it; you won't be able to on the video, but I won't offer scratch and sniff either but it's a combination of frankincense and myrrh and other spices and aromatic things that were around at the time.

(*There were bowls of pot pourri in the gallery.*)

Because, what happens in a museum is that you don't smell it, and life stinks and life smells, like, you know, life smells good, life smells bad and a culture that was so involved in perfumes, to walk through the British Museum and the Egyptian collection and you smell nothing you don't even smell humanity. I felt that it was really important to include that element of smell because it is a really important part of every culture. And also, because of the enclosed space I guess I wanted an intimate kind of temple feeling, more I guess that enclosed sanctuary sort of feeling and the smells would go along with that because smells are very evocative.

Working with the staff of the museum has been very good. They've been incredibly helpful. Working with the monolith like the British Museum is a whole other issue. But all the staff here are really great and, you know, James (*the Curator*) was wonderful from the idea from the very beginning to actually doing it. I'm sure that it wasn't an easy thing to do.

It's such an important thing to have artists interact with the permanent collection because, I think what happens is, people forget it's art. There's no, you know, they say it's culture but culture *is* art. It doesn't separate, it's about creativity, humanity's about creativity, it's not separate - culture and art. You can't separate them, you can try but it's a very unhappy separation. So, to actually get the artist back into viewing art - because every artist perceives this as art, every historian perceives this as history and every curator and museum I guess perceives it as culture. But it's, you know, it's all these things but, I guess I perceive it as art because that's what I'm in. But, it's been an amazing experience. To touch history, when I was working with the collection to actually hold 2,000/3,000 year old things in my hand. It was just this hand that did it. It is the experience of actually touching history is one that I'll never forget and you know, I want to do more.

Interviewer: Do you get a different type of audience for (your) work (here) than you would otherwise, or that you've had before?

R.K.: The British Museum is the number one tourist attraction and so people come here for all sorts of reasons. They don't come here to look at art. They come here because they have to if they come to England or if they come to London, they have to say they've been to the British Museum. It's fabulous because it's free and because the pieces are so old and there's so many different things to look at. And these are the people, I'm not saying that these are the people that wouldn't go into a gallery but, I think a lot of the ways that the gallery sector is set up and the hierarchy for culture can make some people uncomfortable in a traditional gallery setting. And so, I think it is important to have work side by side so yes, I think there are people who would never have walked into a gallery in their life that have accidentally stumbled into the exhibition and I think that's good, you know, whether they see it or whether they are inspired to do things themselves.

Interviewer: Have you had any reactions?

R.K.: The reactions I've had have been really positive. I've had guards come up and say they've really enjoyed my piece and that really made me happy. I've been here three or four times since the exhibition opened and some woman asked me to autograph her book, EEK! But the overall . . . all the different people I've talked to about the exhibition have, you know, just thought it's been such a momentous occasion to have, to actually have contemporary art in such

an historical based place. I haven't heard anything bad about it of course, maybe they'd be afraid to tell me anything bad. No, I think the feedback has been a positive one.

Interviewer: Do you think this will have any direct bearing on future work, that you can identify?

R.K.: I'd like to work with artefacts other than personal artefacts. I found that quite inspiring. A lot of my work tends to be about my family and I don't necessarily feel I've exhausted that. I have been inspired by having access to other materials. I'm, I guess having worked for almost three years on this project, I'm sort of like you know, and (because) this is the last week (there's) a sort of bitter sweet feeling because especially when you do an installation, I know this will never be like this again. It's not like a painting where there'll be a commodity, but I'll never have . . . this installation as is it. There will never be . . . it will never be in this space again. It will never be using these statues again. These artefacts will never be put together in the same way. That statue doesn't belong here, but these go back to their home. These go back and are put in their boxes or put on display. This is a moment in time and that's also quite exciting, but it's also very difficult when you realise that's it, you have nothing left. I still have my pieces that will go back. My jewellery will go back in the drawer and my photographs will go back on the shelf. This is it. That's it.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE OUTREACH AND MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

As the vast majority of schools intended their museum visit to meet the criteria of the National Curriculum history and art syllabi at Key Stage 2, I tried to structure some activities which would enable the children to have a richly sensuous experience, in addition to one which might motivate them to deduce information about ancient Egypt and the ancient Egyptians.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

1. Thinking about the age of objects:

I began each session by showing the children three objects namely: a new porcelain plate with the date June 1999 (ref. fig. 4.1) p. 145; an ancient bowl from China, date unknown (ref. fig. 4.2) p. 145; and a Victorian (china) doll which had once belonged to my great grandmother c. 1860 (ref. fig. 4.3) p. 146. These objects were passed around the class to allow the children to touch and investigate their size, shape, weight and texture. Then three children held these objects at the front of the class and I asked the children for their observations. A discussion followed during which they discovered that though they were all partially or entirely made from clay, they were made at different times and in different places. The date on the plate convinced them that it was new; the distinctive style of the doll's clothes made them guess it had been made in the nineteenth century and was therefore old; and the unusual script and decrepit state of the bowl made them suggest that it might well have been made in Japan or China, many hundreds of years ago which would make it ancient. They also established that the state of an object was not always indicative of its age, as some relatively new objects could be chipped or damaged, while some ancient objects could be so well preserved they might appear to be new.

2 Thinking about collecting and collections:

To make the connection between ancient objects and ancient Egyptian objects, and particularly the ancient Egyptian objects in the Myers Collection, I asked the children if they collected anything. As a rule practically all the children responded to this question, and I briefly made a list of their collections. I then

told them the story of how Major Myers became a collector of ancient Egyptian objects whilst on military duty in Egypt; and how just before his death in South Africa at the start of the Boer War, he had willed his collection to his old school, Eton College. I then showed the children six slides of different objects from the collection, and we discussed what they might be made from and what the ancient Egyptians might have used them for.

3. Searching for clues - learning to be a detective:

After discussing these objects I divided the class into eight groups and gave each one a plastic box containing a jigsaw. I had previously made these from enlarged photographs and fibre-board, using images of objects from the collection (ref. figs. 4.4 - 4.11). See illustrations on pages 147 - 150. Drawing an analogy between detectives and archæologists, who both need to find clues to solve puzzles or mysteries, I asked the children to make up a picture of an ancient Egyptian object by fitting the pieces of their jigsaw together. Once they had completed their puzzle I gave them a sheet with some very brief questions to help them learn how to look and deduce information from their object. See below.

Name

A Mystery Object

Answer the following questions by completing the sentences .

What colour is this object?

This object is

Is this object rough or smooth?

This object is

Is this object damaged or perfect?

This object is

Is this object made by hand or by machine?

This object was made by

What materials did the ancient Egyptians use to make this object?

The ancient Egyptian's used to make this object.

What did the ancient Egyptians use this object for?

The ancient Egyptians used this object as a

If this object is decorated draw a small part of the decoration in the space below.

Do you like this object?

I this object.

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

The children took part in three activities during their visit to the museum. These were: Sketching; A Treasure Hunt; and A Handling Session.

1. Sketching:

There were three different types of objects which the children had the choice of sketching. These were:

- a mummy case displayed in two halves to display both the inside of the base and the front of the lid. See page 216 (ref. fig. 5.2).
- the base of a red granite statue showing the feet of the Pharaoh, Rameses II. See page 217 (ref. fig. 5.3).
- two pharaonic cartonnage death-masks. See page 218 (ref. fig. 5.4).

The children were given a piece of A4. drawing paper and a pencil and they used clip-boards to give them a firm base on which to press. Occasionally the children found the decoration on the mummy case quite difficult to draw, and with only fifteen to twenty minutes, I suggested that they concentrate on just part of the design.

2. The Treasure Hunt

I photographed fourteen objects from the collection in large scale, pasted them onto fibre board and covered them with translucent film to make them durable. See illustrations (ref. nos. 3.2 - 3.15) on pages 103 - 107. The children then chose one of these cards and located the object from amongst the displays. Once they had found their object they answered questions from a discovery sheet entitled, 'Finding Out About the Ancient Egyptians', See below. Because I felt it was important for them to spend more time looking carefully at the objects rather than writing, I supplied a number of possible answers to each question on the sheet, so all they had to do was circle their choice.

Most children found this quick, fairly easy and fun to do. However, there were a number of objects which the children found difficult to locate because they had wrongly assumed that every object was as large as the picture on the card. In fact there were several objects which were extremely small and needed perseverance to be located.

Name

Finding out about the Ancient Egyptians

Take a picture card and find the object which matches it.

Now circle the words which answer the questions.

What is this object?

a model of a man a fish a hedgehog a rattle
a cup a crocodile a flask jewellery a baboon
part of a coffin lid a lucky charm
a bowl a shabti a mirror

What is this object made from?

clay wood metal glass shell stone

What colour is this object?

brown white blue green yellow
black gold

What size is this object?

little medium-sized big

Was this object made by hand or by machine?

hand machine

Is this object damaged or is it perfect?

damaged perfect

What was this object used for?

as decoration to look at to put in a coffin
to drink from to put things in as a lucky charm
as a coffin lid

Is this object decorated?

it is decorated it is plain

Where would this object have been used?

in an ancient Egyptian house
in an ancient Egyptian temple
in an ancient Egyptian coffin

Who would have used this object?

an ancient Egyptian man
an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh
an ancient Egyptian lady
an ancient Egyptian priest

Do you like this object?

I do not like my object.

I like my object.

Draw a picture of your object in the space below.

3. The Handling Session:

I was extremely fortunate that the curator and Egyptologist allowed me to use five ancient objects as a handling collection. These were: a canopic jar lid in the shape of a baboon; a shabti made out of Egyptian faïence; a bronze death-mask of a cat; a pair of inlaid eyes from a mummy case; and a wooden head-rest. See illustrations (ref. nos. 316 - 3.20) pages 108 - 110. To ensure that the objects were not damaged through perspiration from or dirt, I bought hundreds of pairs of thin plastic gloves. These were adult-sized because they are not made for children. While the children coped very well with these, there were occasions when the plastic was difficult to prise apart and they needed help to put the gloves on. Furthermore, there were times when time various children told me how the gloves made their hands feel hot and sweaty.

Once the children had donned their gloves they sat down around a rectangular table which seated eight comfortably but could accommodate about ten at a squeeze. I then gave an object to each pair of children and asked them to keep it on the table. This worked very well and throughout the nine months of the exhibition we had no casualties. I asked the children to investigate their object like a detective or archæologist by turning it around and upside down to try to establish what it was made from and what it might have been used for. Once they had discussed several ideas the children took it in turns to tell their peers what they had found. A general discussion usually followed with all the children taking part.